

HEARING THE GAZE, FEELING THE SOUND:
DIRECTED LISTENING IN AUDIO REMIX CULTURE

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By

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the cultural and textual forms that direct our experience of listening. It addresses this consumption from both the bodily frameworks of intersectional subjectivity as well as affective assemblage. The concept of the assemblage allows for tracking mobile auditory flows of sensation, while intersectionality best models the position of minority bodies, minority politics, and minority listening in contemporary culture. In moving between these, I argue for the enduring, mutually-reinforcing necessity of using both. Finally, the remix provides both a methodological lens for revealing directive audio forms as well as marking a particular historic shift in listening.

In chapter one, I examine *Spork! An Erotic Love Story* (2009) by cirrocumulus and jiaren_shadow. This piece is a reworking of the audiobook adaptation of the novelization of the eleventh *Star Trek* (2009) feature film. The woman-authored remix creates a male-male erotic story based on diegetically heterosexual protagonists. In doing so, it reveals the way listening is being directed in the original both in terms of intersectionality and sensation. The intersectional analysis focuses on gender, using the remix to bring out how listening is mediated through a male voice and the correspondence between this mediation and the erasure of women in the narrative. In terms of sensation, this comparison highlights the shift in encouraged manifestations of arousal from feelings rooted in action and adventure to that of sexual

stimulation. I also explore the text's relationship to the *Star Trek* franchise and its position as sound, as a remix, and as pornography. The chapter builds to an argument that remix culture facilitates an explosion of mediated bodies that represent a more flexible sense of the auditory for the contemporary moment.

Chapter two listens to the audio of a parodic remix of Lady Gaga's "Alejandro" (2010) by Latina comedienne, La Coacha (2010). The analysis locates the tensions between remix and source text at the intersection of race, sexuality, and gender, in its examination of the way Gaga's voice directs listeners in regards to Latin American male sexuality. Affectively, this chapter addresses humor and sensations of amusement. I conclude with a more thorough discussion of the union between affective and intersectional analytics and their mutual dependence as made clear in La Coacha's work.

Having paired grassroots remixes with commercial audio production in both chapters, the conclusion uncouples them, returning to this introduction's examinations of Lady Gaga and DJ Earworm on their own. This section unpacks the question of who Lady Gaga and Earworm are. I sketch the relationship between the explosion of Gaga's body by commercial representation with the subsequent assembling of Earworm's out of these exploded pieces and those of other stars. This is followed by a discussion of the greater implications of the thesis for remix culture and for scholarship on listening.

This excursion is dedicated to my thirteen year old self from 1999. He not only opens the thesis but haunts it throughout. Deleuze, Puar, and others have told us that the process of reassembling means he is no longer with us.

In memoriam,
JOHN C. HARRISON

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PREFACE: 1999

I was thirteen years old when I first heard a piece of remixed sound. I was at home alone unloading the dishwasher when I switched on the small AM/FM radio that sat in the corner of my kitchen. Swiveling the dial, I found one of the two Top 40 stations we could access from my childhood home on the back of Signal Mountain, Tennessee. I tuned into a syndicated Saturday evening program purporting to be “the biggest party on the planet.” It was and continues to be *Open House Party* (1987-present), hosted by DJ John Garabedian. A recognizable boyband track was playing initially – maybe it was that summer’s mega hit, “I Want It That Way” (1999) by the Backstreet Boys – but as it came to a close, I started to notice that something was different. The song began a metamorphosis, first in small ways – altered beats, original sound effects – then with larger, more noticeable shifts. These divergences grew, increasingly capturing my attention, until I stopped my chores altogether and concentrated on what I was hearing.

My memory of what followed is perfectly clear: the moment when the voice of Jennifer Lopez began to be broadcast, the moment I recognized it was hers, and the moment when her non-specific moans melted into identifiable lyrics. With lingering confusion but palpable excitement, I realized that the Backstreet Boys were blending straight into “Waiting for Tonight” (1999). As I listened further, I realized the introductory crossfade was not the only manipulation carved into the Lopez song. The tempo was also increased and in place of the original’s maracas, the beat was set to the throbs of a drum machine. The seamless transition between tracks took place again when “Waiting for Tonight” was over. And it repeated several more times that evening as I continued to listen with rapt attention until my parents and sisters returned

home. These moments of listening exposed me to the basic elements of remix composition. The two tactics of textual intervention I recognized in my kitchen – augmenting or reformulating an original track and combining two or more existing tracks – represent the majority of contemporary audio remix practice and are engaged by the archive of this thesis.

I also broach the broader relationship between listening and the body, which resonates with my memory of that night. That first experience of remixed sound struck deep chords with the identities I inhabited as a young teenager. It would be a few more years before I began openly narrating my sexuality as “gay,” but I could already conceive of a strain of gay culture staged in bars and clubs with particular sonic geographies not unlike the J.Lo dance mix I had heard. My younger self’s vague and intuited sense of the privileged position of remixed sound for gay spaces turned out to be correct with similar lengthened, sped up and interpenetrated pop hits dominating many of the places I would eventually visit in college.

The raced body and music of Lopez, herself, remixed or not, also played a role in what opened up for me in that moment in 1999. At the time, Lopez was one of a handful of Latino/a artists getting airplay on mainstream radio stations around the country, including my hometown in East Tennessee. As a biracial Latino boy growing up in a town where the brown community was limited to my household, the sudden intoning of these voices – Lopez, Iglesias, Martín, Marc Anthony – came as an identitarian shock.

However, that night in my youth listening to *Open House Party*, the effects and affects of sound vibrated beyond the confines of my intersecting identities. My experience of listening generated pleasures I had not theretofore known. I reveled both in the contours of the rhythm and melody as well as the emotional tenor of the overarching anthemic tone. But I also felt a

nascent delight that was wholly rooted in the track's relation to its sources. A "difference in sameness" that compelled my attention as I eagerly sorted the sounds between what was old and what was new. This interest in sonic variation and theme persists today and informs the work that follows.

It is this experience that launched the hereafter documented excursions into listening. The realization I had that night in '99 showed me the possibilities of bending, manipulating, mashing together, speeding up, slowing down, subtracting, augmenting, reversing, rewriting, reconceptualizing, reconstructing or otherwise changing recorded sound. This thesis uses the term remix to refer to the results of all of these form-altering tactics and, indeed, to any text explicitly taking manipulations of pre-existing texts as their point of departure. That is the methodological and substantive bedrock on which I have built what follows.

Launching from the remix, this thesis examines the cultural and textual forms that direct our experience of listening. It addresses this consumption from both the bodily frameworks of intersectional subjectivity as well as affective assemblage. The concept of the assemblage allows for tracking mobile auditory flows of sensation, while intersectionality best models the position of minority bodies, minority politics, and minority listening in contemporary culture.¹ In moving between these, I argue for the enduring, mutually-reinforcing necessity of using both. Finally, the remix provides both a methodological lens for revealing directive audio forms and marks a particular historic shift in listening.

¹ This thesis includes women under the sign of "minority."

INTRODUCTION: DIRECTED LISTENING

Every year since 2007, DJ Earworm aka Jordan Roseman has released a song in his series, *United States of Pop*.² For each track, Earworm takes the top twenty-five hits from that year's *Billboard* Hot 100 chart and cuts them up in order to recombine the pieces into something new. The resulting remixes are meant to tease out an overarching tone and a set of representative themes for the year in US popular music. Earworm's 2009 episode is titled, "United State of Pop 2009 (Blame it on the Pop)" (2009).³ It unfolds as a narrative of endurance and recovery, connecting to the hints of upturn in the country's economy following the subprime mortgage crisis and subsequent financial downturn. This theme is present in several songs of that year's top twenty-five. One example is T.I.'s "Live Your Life" (2008), the message of which is neatly encapsulated by a preface in which T.I. adapts Friedrich Nietzsche: "At the end of the road, through all the adversity, if you can get where you wanted to be, you remember: Whatever don't kill you, make you stronger."⁴

Although it is clear how a song like "Live Your Life" contributes to a story about perseverance and bouncing back, other examples are less obvious. Take Lady Gaga's "Just Dance" (2008), the first single released from the artist's debut album, *The Fame* (2008). The lyrics describe a situation in which Gaga is so intoxicated at a dance club that she becomes

² DJ Earworm is the name under which the artist performs live and publishes his music. Jordan Roseman is the name credited for the authorship of his book on remix strategy, *Audio Mashup Construction Kit: ExtremeTech*. The United States of Pop project is hosted on his website at <http://dyearworm.com/>.

³ Accessed April 9, 2011 from <http://dyearworm.com/united-state-of-pop-2009-blame-it-on-the-pop.htm>.

⁴ The phrase, "Whatever does not kill me makes me stronger," appears in a list of "maxims and barbs" in Friedrich Nietzsche's "Twilight of the Idols, or, How to Philosophize with a Hammer" (Nietzsche, 2006: 456).

utterly disoriented, forgetting where she is and losing essential personal belongings such as her keys and phone. In order to deal with the situation, Gaga takes the tact of simply dancing through the delirium. The line, “Gonna be okay,” appears in the chorus, indicating that despite her state, everything will ultimately be fine so she may as well “Just Dance.”

In Earworm’s hands this line is repurposed through its temporal positioning adjacent to other lyrics. In the “Blame it on the Pop” remix, Gaga’s sings, “Gonna be okay,” just after the line, “So don’t worry, even if the sky is falling down, down, down,” from the song, “Down” (2009), by Jay Sean, and just before “...when it knocks you down,” from Keri Hilson’s “Knock You Down” (2009). The resulting line constructed by DJ Earworm is: “So don’t worry, even if the sky is falling down, down, down, gonna be okay when it knocks you down.” In this formation, the suggested signification is changed. Although the original refers to a situation being alright, enduring public intoxication contrasts dramatically with persistence through difficult financial circumstances. The new context directs our listening to an adjusted meaning of “okay.”

Cutting up and recombining song lyrics is not the only move DJ Earworm makes in assembling his remix. Gaga’s “Gonna be okay” along with the lines from Hilson and Jay Sean are also abstracted from their original music. The majority of the underscoring for “Blame it on the Pop” is taken from “I Gotta Feeling” (2009) by the Black Eyed Peas, and at the point when Gaga plays, additional elements are interwoven from another Black Eyed Peas song, “Boom Boom Pow” (2009). The tonal undercurrent of these tracks contributes to the sensory shift between the original Gaga song and the way the line plays in the Earworm remix. The underlying

beats lend an uplifting feeling to a series of lyrics whose original emotive contexts vary significantly.

Earworm's endeavor in recombining and reconstructing these texts relies on a manipulation of the way listening is directed. Directed listening is a key term for this thesis, referring to the cultural and textual forms of recorded sound that create the circumstances for a particular reading by consumers. Directed listening guides listeners toward a shared reading regardless of the diversity in their actual experiences of hearing.

In 1975, Laura Mulvey made a related argument about the visual gaze in classic Hollywood film. Mulvey's essay, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," describes the three looks operational in film: the look of the camera, the look of the audience at the screen, and the look of the characters. She writes, "The conventions of narrative film deny the first two and subordinate them to the third, the conscious aim being always to eliminate intrusive camera presence and prevent a distancing awareness in the audience" (Mulvey: 1989, 25). In other words, filmmakers sought to minimize the extra-filmic looks in order to encourage identification between the viewer and the characters. This was meant to draw them into the diegetic world of the film in order to encourage a more seamless experience of the media object.

This identification is achieved by aligning the camera with the view of a character, particularly through the cinematographic convention of shot/countershot. Lining up the audience's view with that of the character encourages viewers to bridge the gap between the sensory and contemplative perspectives of the body on screen. Mulvey uses the example of Alfred Hitchcock's films, *Rear Window* (1954) and *Vertigo* (1958), writing, "Hitchcock's skillful use of identification processes and liberal use of subjective camera from the point of view of the

male protagonist draw the spectators deeply into his position, making them share his uneasy gaze” (1989: 23). This focus on formal elements reveals how the contours of these films’ textual bodies direct viewing. A change in the prevailing camera perspectives might deeply change the encouraged reading. Taking this as a partial analog, I trace a parallel argument about audio texts, directed listening, and cultures of sound.

I will argue that like viewing, listening is directed by textual and cultural auditory forms. This does not mean that each individual consumer hears the same thing. Certainly, they do not. However, each consumer does come into negotiation with similar elements, including raced and sexed voices, affective musical tone, and sensory vocal cues. Being directed by each of these has a specific cultural valence. Forms may be rejected or misunderstood, they might be ignored, or associated with wildly divergent themes or experiences, but what is published is nevertheless the shared starting point.

In order to unearth these auditory negotiations, this thesis works through two case texts using the frameworks of intersectional subjectivity and affective assemblage. These frameworks differ in their approaches to the media-consuming body. The first is based in identity politics as it is widely understood, attending to markers of difference such as race, gender, and sexual orientation. The second is the assemblage, a conception of the body from Gilles Deleuze and Pierre-Félix Guattari (1983; 1987). Jasbir K. Puar (2007) further develops this theoretical intervention into queer theories of affect. The utilities of both identity politics and assemblage are explored further below, and that these two tactics ought to always complement one another emerges as the concluding argument of the second chapter. Each chapter presents a focused study of a particular remix. The first listens to *Spork! An Erotic Love Story* (2009) by

cirrocululus and jiaren_shadow.⁵ The second examines La Coacha's "Lady GaGa 'Alejandro' music video featuring Ace of Base!" (2010).⁶ Methodologically, I read the two remixes against their source texts as a polemic move to make apparent the contingencies of the sources in terms of their identitarian and affective directive forms. This also, however, brings into stark relief the contemporary relationship between remix culture and practices of a listening. Even as remix concretely changes textual forms, it also represents a change in reception, pushing an awareness that everything one hears might be other than it is.

SUBJECTS & OBJECTS

Mulvey's essay contains elements from two sides of the ongoing methodological debate in the humanities concerning textual analysis. On one side, she is invested in questions of viewing, textual consumption, and identification between audience and character. All of these fit broadly under the rubric of those championing consumer and consumption-based media scholarship. This work famously includes work from Stuart Hall and other reception theorists and those working broadly in the area of reader-response criticism within literary theory.⁷ On the other side, however, Mulvey identifies the locus of identificatory responses in the text, itself,

⁵ Fan pseudonyms on the website livejournal.com where this piece was originally posted are not usually capitalized. For the purpose of this thesis, I have written fans' pseudonyms consistent with the way they represent themselves. *Spork! An Erotic Love Story* accessed April 9, 2011 from http://community.livejournal.com/ontd_startrek/1043908.html.

⁶ This thesis refers to La Coacha's "Lady GaGa 'Alejandro' music video featuring Ace of Base!" as "'Alejandro'" and Lady Gaga's song as "Alejandro." "Lady GaGa 'Alejandro' music video featuring Ace of Base!" accessed April 9, 2011 from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Xwawlh_GCE.

⁷ I first encountered this group with the Stuart Hall's *Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse* (1973)

arguing that the films structure audience viewing. This emphasis on the body of the texts and her readings of them mark a return to a more traditional humanities approach of analysis in which the text is a static object to be read by individual scholars.

This thesis enters into this debate with a similarly bifurcated stance. In arguing that listening is directed by audio recordings themselves, my emphasis is placed on the contours of texts – their formal and cultural elements – and how they create the circumstances for certain listenings, regardless of the diversity of actual listening that may take place. In this way, I seek to respect and account for work done on the ontology of consumption while still arguing for a shared emphasis on the sound, itself, and its involvement in moments of reception. Therefore, while I endeavor to read these audio texts, I do so in order to approach the context of consumption, rather than to understand the narratives in new ways.

Two scholars on the consumption side of this debate particularly inform the work of this thesis. The first is José Esteban Muñoz and his work on identificatory processes vis-à-vis majority culture. The second is Amit S. Rai, who addresses affect and ecologies of sensation in viewing. In Muñoz's first book, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (1999), he examines performance and art by Carmelita Tropicana, Vaginal Davis, Pedro Zamora, and others in order to map the possibility of disidentification. Disidentification fits into a tripartite taxonomy of possible responses to dominant culture along with identification and counter-identification. Particularly salient for minority consumers, but equally applicable for all subjects, disidentification involves partial identification with a given manifestation of culture that compels the consumer not to reject it, but rather to mentally or manifestly take it in another direction.

This connects to my work in three ways. First, the remixed audio texts I examine might usefully be mapped as the products of disidentification. Like the performance art Muñoz cites as reimagining elements of dominant culture, these remixes take specific texts and build something new out of them, saving pieces but taking them in a new direction. This, in turn, reveals the politically salient contingencies of the original. Second, Muñoz's substantial engagement with minority politics and minority negotiations of (often racist) media mirrors my investment in the particular and particularly high stakes of engaging with works whose existence is marked out at the intersections of minoritized racial, gender, and sexual identities. Finally, returning to the question of consumption critique versus textual analysis, I have built the claims of this paper around an awareness of the broad possibilities Muñoz suggests in terms of the identificatory results of textual consumption. Although I focus on texts, I eschew teleological arguments that any given individual will hear a text in a certain way, moving instead to analyze the texts themselves for the kinds of listening they suggest, a move that remains relevant even in light of the powerful concept of disidentification.

Amit Rai centers his analysis of Bollywood on consumption, rather than textual narrative in *Untimely Bollywood: Globalization and India's New Media Assemblage* (2009). He writes of his academic goals, "The overall aim of this book is to shift the analysis of audiovisual media from a representational frame where the image, discourse, narrative, signifier, and ideal are all in various ways master tropes that produce a linear causal relation to consciousness and identity." To this end, he proposes a framework for understanding representation: "But what if representation is an event that performs anew with each repetition and with each new scene of circulation being an unpredictable but patterned trajectory of present conforming to past but

open to future mutations?” (Rai, 2009: 3). I am particularly interested in his formulation of “unpredictable but patterned,” or, elsewhere, “stochastic but patterned” processes (Rai, 2009: 70). This characterization resonates with my own project in its attempt to simultaneously account for variation and evolution of meaning, contingent on circumstances of consumption and the specificities of the involved bodies, while still acknowledging the normative and normalizing patterns built into texts, production, and circulation. It is the textual basis for this patternedness in audio media I will address here. Further, however, Rai’s work informs mine in his framing of “media as a contested production of sensation” (2009: 3). His focus on sensations as related to affect has influenced my work with the affective readings of my texts as described below.

Like Mulvey, then, both Muñoz and Rai focus on what happens when various consumers come into negotiation with media. For Mulvey, this means concern for formal filmic tactics encouraging identification between consumer and character, as opposed to Muñoz’s assertions that identification need not take place through simple essentialized pathways or Rai’s more affective focus. All three still engage in varying degrees of textual and performance analysis. Although their focus is distributed differently, they agree with Mulvey in a shared concern with the materialities of text.

The stakes of Mulvey’s analysis in “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” are not just in the mapping of relations between texts, culture industry, and consumers. Mulvey is concerned primarily with specific viewers, whom she reads as being made the object of discursive violence by classic Hollywood cinema – women. In the positioning of subjective camera, she notes that the audience is only invited to identify with the looks of male characters. Additionally, these male characters may sometimes look at one another but are often shown looking at women.

Mulvey connects this formal element of the shot structure of films to the greater political issue of patriarchy and women's power within culture. She writes, "In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female," and shows how this operates in her filmic examples in order to fashion her concept of the male gaze.

Mulvey adopts the concept of the gaze from psychoanalysis, originally introduced separately as the French, *le regard*, by both Jacques Lacan (2006) and Jean-Paul Sartre (1956). Both Sartre and Lacan used it to connect visuality with subject formation, Lacan in his famous account of the mirror stage when the six-to-eighteen month old child encounters its own image for the first time. Mulvey, too, focuses on subjectification, specifically for female film viewers vis-à-vis representations of gender: "A woman performs within the narrative, the gaze of the spectator and that of the male characters in the film are neatly combined without breaking narrative verisimilitude" (1989: 19). This leaves women in a vexed position vis-à-vis the text. She suggests that women are left with two options if they are to take pleasure in film – the masochism of being always looked at or the denial of self involved in always identifying with men, who are consistently coded as dominant. Although Mulvey's work focuses only on gender and therefore cannot be characterized as intersectional, this thesis takes a similar identity-based framework of subjectivity as the first of two used to analyze the remixed source texts.

The identitarian portion of Mulvey's essay marked a watershed moment in theorizations of minority spectatorship and has thus subsequently been critiqued, expanded, and problematized. In *Disidentifications*, Muñoz says of Mulvey and Christian Metz (1975), whom he reads as her forerunner, "[Their] theories, when considered together, offer a convincing model of spectatorship and its workings. Their models fall short insofar as they unduly valorize some

very limited circuits of identification” (Muñoz, 1999: 25). He points to authors of color, such as Manthia Diawara (1993) who inserts race into the equation, pointing out that Black men are not coded with the masterful male gaze and that the position of Black spectators of either sex cannot be accounted for in Mulvey’s formulation.

In his book, *Female Masculinity* (1998), Jack Halberstam also questions Mulvey’s unexamined assumption that masochistic pleasure and problematic representation must always be cast in undifferentiatedly negative terms.⁸ In writing about photography, she addresses Esther Newton’s (1972) proposed homophobic trope of the “mannish lesbian.” “Sometimes...it is precisely the stereotype that can access pleasure: the juxtaposition of two stereotypical images – the butch in drag and the femme in hyper-feminine costume – resonates with a particular queer history and simultaneously upends the conventional scene of hetero-normativity that the picture mimics” (Halberstam, 1998: 176). In other words, even as these stereotypes may feed into institutionalized representational essentialism, they may simultaneously open the possibility of other meanings with important political possibilities.

Further, both Muñoz and Halberstam ultimately level a queer critique at Mulvey, stating that identification must be “figured in terms of instability, mobility, oscillation, and multiplicity” (Muñoz, 1999: 27-28). This assertion is embodied in Halberstam’s exploration of cross-identification between masculine women and masculine men. For example, in her reading of the August 1993 cover of *Vanity Fair* depicting Cindy Crawford shaving the face of butch lesbian musician, k. d. lang, Halberstam suggests that in order to access desire for Cindy Crawford in the

⁸ In this thesis, I refer to Halberstam as Jack and use masculine pronouns though the work cited here was originally published under the name Judith.

photo, heterosexual men can and do identify with lang. This flexibility is positioned specifically in terms of Mulvey and the gaze by critical race theorist, Michele Wallace (1993). She writes, “Even as ‘The Law of the Father’ may impose its premature closure on the filmic ‘gaze’ in the coordination of suture and classical narrative, disparate factions in the audience, not equally well indoctrinated in the dominant discourse, may have their way, now and then, with interpretation” (Wallace, 1993: 257). Here, Wallace points to failures of ideological indoctrination as a possible source of flexible media engagement. However, Muñoz expands this by suggesting that queers of color and others often engage in such flexible identifications regardless of how well they understand the intended readings.

Despite all of this, or perhaps in light of it, this thesis devotes some of its attention to “some very limited circuits of identification” (Muñoz, 1999: 27), reading essential markers of race and gender, in particular, as meaningful for intersectional analysis of directed listening. For even as understandings of minority negotiations of culture continue to be nuanced and refined, there remains a utility in these basic readings. In an American political climate that valorizes the heteronormative white male above all others with its system of glass ceilings, prison pipelines, homophobic school bullying, Islamophobia, anti-transgender violence, unequal education, and English-only policies, work at the most basic points of intersectionality remains essential. In media, given the endurance of formal and cultural codes of dominance – early deaths for characters of color, invisibilization of women, pathologization of queerness – to leave these stones unturned even in the name of complex points of mobile engagement would be to silence an ongoing problem. Muñoz writes of an instance in Wallace he reads as having affinities with his project, “White supremacist aesthetics is rearranged and put in the service of historically

maligned black beauty standards. ... Disidentification ... is about expanding and problematizing identity and identifications, not abandoning any socially prescribed identity components” (Muñoz, 1999: 29). This is to say that although the concept of disidentification allows for multiple and mobile vectors of identification that complicate all essential notions of race, the concept of race remains ever relevant. Therefore, even as he and Wallace twist the dominant cultural artifact at the moment of reception, their argument is still undergirded by the characterization of it as, fundamentally, white supremacist.

ASSEMBLING SELVES

This intersectional identity framework is complimented by one based in flows of affinity, which seeks to account for critiques of Mulvey by removing subjectivity from the equation altogether and focus instead on assemblage, affect, and sensation. This crucially adds the dimension of feeling to case analyses that need not be anchored to bodies on screen but might rather be structured by more diverse tonal elements. Like intersectional analysis, this framework seeks to identify structuring sensations that lead consumers through a text and have consequences for their engagement. Unlike intersectionality, however, the cultural valences are not connected to specific histories of inequality but to rather more amorphous structures of feeling such as mood, preference, and personal aesthetics. This move is particularly rooted in the work of Jasbir K. Puar’s *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (2007).

Traditional thinking about intersectionality focuses on the identity-bearing subject, emblemizing its conceptual dominance in cultural studies. However, the complication and

unsettling of identification and identity provides a segue into another possibility of thinking bodies – that of the assemblage. In the conclusion to her book, Puar writes:

The modern subject is exhausted, or rather... we have exhausted the modern subject. We have multiplied it to accommodate all sorts of differences (i.e., a politics of inclusion), intersected it with every variable of identity imaginable, split it to account for the unknown realms of the subconscious, infused it with greater individual rights (the rights-bearing subject). (Puar, 2007: 206)

Puar proposes a framework based on Gilles Deleuze's concept of the assemblage as the body constantly in flux, assembling and reassembling itself through its interactions with other bodies, with media, and with the world. By focusing on the constant interactivity of bodies, this framework bears forth the promise of queer theory to destabilize identity by undoing the singularity of individuals. As she says, "The dispersion of the boundaries of the bodies forces a completely chaotic challenge to normative conventions of gender, sexuality, and race, disobeying normative conventions of 'appropriate' bodily practices and the sanctity of the able body" (Puar, 2007: 221). In other words, if we are constantly reassembling with pieces of those we come into contact with, there can be no singularity of self and thus no stable identity.

This work also importantly builds upon Brian Massumi (2002), who shares with Puar a desire to move beyond conceptions of the body "defined by its pinning to the grid" (Massumi, 2002: 2). In wanting to return movement to theories of subjectivity that have been dominated by stasis, Massumi writes. "When a body is in motion, it does not coincide with itself. It coincides with its own transition: its own variation. The range of variations it can be implicated in is not present in any given movement, much less in any position it passes through" (2002: 4). This is to say, then, that identity can only exist as a point of passage. Consequently, a framework of constant movement will necessarily shake up essential mappings of bodies onto these points.

This critical shift refocuses attention from “naming, visibility, epistemology, representation, and meaning,” to “feeling, tactility, ontology, affect, and information” (Puar, 2007: 215). If we can no longer look to points on a grid, we are instead left with the amorphous sensations that allow us to access ourselves even while in motion. Because these feelings are constantly in flux along with our bodies, they better approximate the reality of something like a self. However, their instability also makes them particularly difficult to represent in the epistemological system of academic writing. This problem is partially mitigated through my focus on directive affect forms within the materialities of text. In other words, feelings toward which we are directed are easier to describe than what we actually ultimately feel.

In terms of sound, this might be sorted in a number of ways. Lyrics or spoken words, for example, prioritize representation and meaning. But according to Roland Barthes (1977), the grain of the voice that sings or speaks those words drifts into feeling. Similarly, musical progressions that might be recorded and mapped by a musicologist using notes, tabs, or instrument designations, while the overall tone of a piece slips into sensation. Particularly relevant here is the term affect, taken from the philosophy of Félix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze (1983; 1987), before coming to Puar and Massumi. The term is highly contested with authors using it in highly divergent ways, from those casting it as coterminous with related terms – “emotion, feeling, expressive sentiment” (Puar, 2007: 207) – to those positioning it wholly beyond the linguistic limitations of discourse. Disagreement about the meaning of affect and how to study it hinges on the fact that, as Puar says, “It is nonetheless caught in the logic it seeks to challenge,” (2007: 207) meaning that in academic attempts to go beyond signification, signifying in written scholarship becomes vexed. She suggests, however, “The collective

project, since all we can really enact is a representational schema of affect, is what we are now developing: an epistemology of ontology and affect” (Puar 2007: 207). Rai (2010) defines it as follows:

Affect becomes the substance of interaction and communication: distinct from “emotion,” affect is defined by its relational, bodily character, and cannot be reduced to an internalized feeling. In that regard, affect is considered pre-individual, operating in that moving strata of being and becoming where the subject and populations meet. Affect is both virtual and actual at once, it is an emergent, incipient space of mutation and potential as well as the site of modulation, control, and capitalist valorization.⁹

Because of my primary focus on texts prior to their dialogue with consumptive bodies, my affective assemblage framework need not fully engage in these debates or anchor itself in a specific meaning of affect. For me, an affective reading is constituted by examinations of textual structure and substance that encourages or directs listening toward certain sensations regardless of the specificities of how they are ultimately experienced.

In this framework, the subject and identities are decentered in order to highlight sensory thresholds of textual or interpersonal interaction, across which assemblage bodies may reconstitute themselves. As Massumi says, “Grids happen. So social and cultural determinations feed back into the process from which they arose. Indeterminacy and determination, change and freeze-framing, go together” (2002: 8). This is to say that even as we move towards an understanding of the unfixed self, a representational frame remains around which a significant portion of human interaction is staged. Affect analysis, therefore, can only be effective when

⁹ Accessed April 9, 2011 from <http://mediaecologiesresonate.wordpress.com/2010/05/31/the-value-of-affect-perception-and-media-in-india-today-2/>.

balanced by that which takes account of the surface, representation, and the analytics of intersectionality.

AUDIO CULTURE

The aforementioned debate of consumption critique versus textual analysis has been contested primarily across visual and literary territory, leaving sound largely untheorized. This thesis' auditory focus, therefore, represents an entrance through the back door. In arguing that the auditory content of textual objects directs consumer listening, this thesis is meant to inform Jonathan Sterne's "a core set of theoretical, cultural, and historical questions...about sound culture" (2003: 3). The stakes of this work are rooted in the imbalance that exists within cultural studies between work that privileges visibility and seeing versus the other senses.

In his introduction to *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (2003), Jonathan Sterne takes the academic dominance of visibility as a point of departure. He begins by debunking three myths corollary to this imbalance – the assumption that sound's absence is trans-academic, the dating of this imbalance to the emergence of modernity in the Enlightenment, and the representation of the problem as a mere dearth of academic work on sound. To the first, he clarifies that the imbalance within contemporary academia is disciplinarily-dependent. It is important to remember that "sound is considered as a unified intellectual problem in some science and engineering fields" (Sterne, 2003: 3) such as acoustics, and that hearing has been investigated "as a physiological process, a kind of receptivity and capacity based on physics, biology, and mechanics" (Sterne, 2003: 2). The problem he and I are citing exists primarily in cultural studies and the social sciences, where visual culture studies is

an active and widely recognized area of inquiry, where as similar legitimation is infrequently extended to sound studies, smell cultures, or work on the other senses.

The second assumption Sterne assesses becomes a major point of exploration for the book as it “offers a history of the possibility of sound reproduction” (2003: 2). He proposes the concept of an “Ensoniment” that went along with the Enlightenment and states that, in fact, “between about 1750 and 1925, sound itself became an object and a domain of thought and practice, where it had previously been conceptualized in terms of particular idealized instances like voice or music” (Sterne, 2003: 2). This complicates narratives of the Enlightenment as being built solely on metaphors of light and sight. These metaphors are connected to rationality and understanding, conceptions of which “have elided differences between the privilege of vision and the totality of vision” (Sterne, 2003: 4).

Lastly and most importantly, Sterne suggests that the problem with sound studies is not that all academics have ignored the sense of hearing. Rather, he characterizes the work that has been done as fragmented, rarely referring back to one another or to larger conceptual questions, a point of particular contrast with what has emerged as visual studies: “Studies of sound tend to shy away from questions of sound culture as such (with a few notable exceptions) and prefer instead to work within other disciplinary or interdisciplinary intellectual domains” (Sterne, 2003: 4). As a result, we have relatively few broadly applicable critical tools that might be used to analyze audio texts like the gaze is in visuality.

Though taking on material significantly divergent from Sterne’s research question about the cultural history of recorded sound, this thesis seeks to locate itself in relation to his set of core questions. Though the focuses differ significantly from Sterne’s – the more contemporary

period, digital media rather than analogue, questions of consumptive bodies – they find commonality in larger questions of listening, sound, and the historical contingencies of both. One point of departure for exploring these larger questions is contained in what Sterne (2003: 15) introduces as the audiovisual litany, a list of essential differences scholars have proposed to account for the singularity of hearing vis-à-vis seeing. It is worth quoting the entire list here:

- hearing is spherical, vision is directional;
- hearing immerses its subject, vision offers a perspective;
- sounds come to us, but vision travels to its object;
- hearing is concerned with interiors, vision is concerned with surfaces;
- hearing involves physical contact with the outside world, vision requires distance from it;
- hearing places us inside an event, seeing gives us a perspective on the event;
- hearing tends toward subjectivity, vision tends toward objectivity;
- hearing brings us into the living world, sight moves us toward atrophy and death;
- hearing is about affect, vision is about intellect;
- hearing is a primarily temporal sense, vision is a primarily spatial sense;
- hearing is a sense that immerses us in the world, vision is a sense that removes us from it.

Sterne proceeds to critique this list as a whole for its false universality, its failure to account for the historicity of the senses, and its linkages to Christian conceptualizations of the senses and salvation. These criticisms, however, are not mounted in order to validate each of these assertions of sound. Rather, what Sterne highlights is that these problematic assumptions have been allowed to stand unquestioned. He contrasts how thoroughly vision has been examined and the paucity of similar examination coalescing around listening. This litany, then, remains a neat list of existing core questions, conceptions, and assumptions against which current academic work on sound might measure itself.

My thesis particularly addresses the second item on the list, the idea that “hearing immerses its subject,” but “vision offers a perspective.” The concept of directed listening

troubles this distinction by proposing a kind of auditory perspective, or gaze. I also, however, engage with the ninth, “Hearing is about affect, vision is about intellect,” by exploring how affect and hearing operate together. Sterne’s work has particular stakes for my use of intersectional subjectivity analysis because of the uneven split between academic attention to visuality and texts appealing to the other senses. Basic identitarian critiques of cultural production have always tended to pool around literature, visual texts such as photography, and multimedia – film, television, or online content. Consequently, too, debates on minority identification and media have primarily been acted out across these textual terrains. These analyses have overlooked leaving the singularities of raced and sexed voices as sounds and other minority-related critiques of directive listening content.

IN THE MIX

Returning to DJ Earworm, I now turn my attention to his formal interventions with existing sounds in order to build out my own methodological contribution to sound studies. When Earworm redirects the way we hear Lady Gaga by changing the musical tone and placing her adjacent to other artists, he is participating in a particular form of cultural production that explicitly takes prior work as its point of departure. In some ways, this definition of the remix is deceptive in its implication that there might be forms of cultural production that are not built on what came before. Jonathan Lethem (2007), for example, demonstrates the impossibility of complete originality in his exploration of the murky borders between plagiarism, homage, influence, and remix. Like Lethem, this thesis takes soft conceptions of originality as foundational. Simply by being produced in a particular place and time by a person or people

who have lived and engaged with the world around them, all texts draw upon previous work.

Complex vectors of influence always come into play with all forms of textual creation.

However, the explicit augmentation, subtraction, and reorganization of text does mark a unique set of practices that have proliferated in the contemporary moment alongside technologies of digital reproduction. Today, remixes are made using media across the spectrum from films and television shows to books, photographs, and video games. These sound texts often take the form of either an augmentation or reformulation of a single text or a combination of two or more existing texts.

Sound has always had a close relationship with the concept of the remix with the term originally being used in the audio context. Historically, what now constitutes audio remix culture can be traced back to multiple forms of early sound experimentation. Of particular import is the dancehall music of late 1960s and early 1970s Jamaica. This history is traced in Michael Veal's *Dub: Soundscapes and Shattered Songs in Jamaican Reggae* (2007), even the title of which gestures toward the formal play of central concern to this thesis. Veal cites Kingston-based recording pioneers including Osbourne "King Tubby" Ruddock, Lee "Scratch" Perry, and Errol "Errol T." Thompson, exploring their contributions to what became known as the sub-genre of dub (2). He describes the dub sound: "Dub music flourished during the period of 'roots' Reggae, and its significance as a style lies in the deconstructive manner in which these engineers remixed reggae songs, applying sound processing technology in unusual ways to create a unique pop music language of fragmented song forms and reverberating soundscapes" (Veal 2). Those soundscapes and fragments were often created from pre-existing music, thus marking dub as an

early practice whose global circulation and influence have become a potent force in popularizing the remix.

Veal's history aside, the nascent academic literature on remix culture has primarily addressed questions of legality. Put simply, the broad debate centers on whether and which remix practices ought to be policed as plagiarism. Among the most influential texts from this set are those by academic and activist, Lawrence Lessig. In his fifth book, *Remix: Making Art and Commerce Thrive in the Hybrid Economy* (2009), Lessig argues that, having been drafted in terms of pre-digital culture, US intellectual property law must be rethought to account for the increased access to technological means of media production and manipulation. He further suggests that this lowering of restrictions will allow for increased experimentation and thus greater media literacy. In this way, he casts the remix in pedagogical terms, a move that has important affinities with my use of the remix as a methodological tool for textual analysis.

Legal arguments for and against the existence of the remix are also relevant to this thesis in that the legal question partially establishes the stakes of generating new critical tools for assessing the cultural work being performed with these practices. However, I will not directly address the question of whether remixes ought to exist, taking as an alternative point of origin the fact that they already do, I will consequently ask what meaning is being made, revealed, and circulated through these texts. Today scholarly work is being done on remix practices in film theory, fan studies, and elsewhere, but this thesis returns to the case of audio, largely to develop a methodological tool for sonic textual reading. In this way, I use the remix as a point of comparison with audio source texts in order to illuminate the contingencies of how consumer listening is being directed. The contrast between the original and what someone has made of it,

and the ways listening is directed differently in these two cases helps reveal the unique affective structures and formal codes of identity dominance operating in the original.

In chapter one, I examine *Spork! An Erotic Love Story* (2009) by cirrocumulus and jiaren_shadow. This piece is a reworking of the audiobook adaptation of the novelization of the eleventh *Star Trek* feature film. The woman-authored remix creates a male-male erotic story based on diegetically heterosexual protagonists. In doing so, it reveals the way listening is being redirected from the original both in terms of intersectionality and sensation. The intersectional analysis focuses on gender, using the remix to bring out how listening is mediated through a male voice and the correspondence between this mediation and the narrative erasure of women. In terms of sensation, this comparison highlights the shift in encouraged manifestations of arousal from feelings rooted in action and adventure to that of sexual stimulation. I also explore the text's relationship to the *Star Trek* franchise and its position as sound, as a remix, and as pornography. The chapter builds to an argument that remix culture facilitates an explosion of mediated bodies that represent a more flexible sense of the auditory in the contemporary moment.

Chapter two listens to a parodic remix of Lady Gaga's "Alejandro" (2010) by Latina comedienne, La Coacha (2010). The analysis locates the tensions between remix and source text at the intersection of race, sexuality, and gender, in its examination of the way Gaga's voice directs listeners in regards to Latin American male sexuality. Affectively, this chapter addresses humor and sensations of amusement. I conclude with a more thorough discussion of the union between affective and intersectional analytics and their mutual dependence, as made clear in La Coacha's remix of Gaga's positioning.

Having paired grassroots remixes with commercial audio production in both chapters, the conclusion uncouples them, returning to this introduction's examinations of Lady Gaga and DJ Earworm. This section unpacks the question of who Lady Gaga and Earworm are. I sketch the relationship between the explosion of Gaga's body by commercial representation and the subsequent assembling of Earworm's persona from these exploded pieces of Gaga and those of other stars. This is followed by a discussion of the greater implications of the thesis for remix culture and for wider scholarship on listening.

HEARING THE GAZE, FEELING THE SOUND

This thesis is staged in the emerging present. The three remixes I take up as central texts appeared in a one year period between the summers of 2009 and 2010. These contemporary texts also complement one another in the range of formal strategies they represent. DJ Earworm draws on pieces of multiple musical texts without adding sounds "of his own." La Coacha also combines songs, but she entirely replaces the speech track with her own humorous pronouncements. Finally, cirrocumulus and jiaren_shadow's *Spork* eschew music entirely, instead reworking the speech of a single text, an audio book.

In terms of nation, all three of these remixes were made by US-based artists with an almost entirely American set of source texts. However, the circulation of media on the internet certainly escapes the confines of a spatially defined nation-state. These questions are taken up briefly in the conclusion in terms of Earworm's transnational sampling.

The aim of this thesis is to bring together theory and methodologies of the remix with existing work on intersectional subjectivity and affective assemblage in order to fashion new

critical tools for analysis of audio culture. In a larger way, this intervention contributes to a corpus of scholarship that takes seriously the range of senses through which bodies mingle with their surroundings in order that those senses to which we have paid less attention might usefully unsettle assumptions of who we are.

CHAPTER 1: *SPORK! AN EROTIC LOVE STORY*

“‘I love you,’ Spock replied softly.” These words end *Spork! An Erotic Love Story* (2009) by cirrocumulus and jiaren_shadow, an audio book remix that creates an erotic tale of sex between *Star Trek*’s two male protagonists by means of sound editing. The story begins with Spock approaching Kirk and making a sensual advance on his uncertain accomplice. He runs his fingers over Kirk’s body, eventually fellating him. Kirk’s uncertainty melts into pleasure. He ejaculates into Spock’s mouth. Spock turns Kirk and penetrates him anally. Finally, they share a kiss and Spock’s confession: “I love you.”

The following examination of *Spork* will use this remix to address the queer gaze, the gendered voice, structures of arousal, and the dissolution of identity for acting and filmic bodies. First, I will explore the source text of *Star Trek* (2009) and its relationship to the remix. Second, I will examine three elements of the text, itself – the formal editing practices that yielded the text as remix, the singularity of the audio medium of the text as speech, and the position of the text as porn relative to visual and textual pornography. Finally, I read the way the text directs listening using this thesis’ dual frameworks of listening bodies. In terms of intersectionality, I examine the gendered narrating voice and corresponding erasure of women in the story. Affectively, I read a shift in the sensations of arousal encouraged between audio book and remix. Finally, I trace the explosion of Spock and the actor who plays him in examining the proliferation of bodies in a text.

For many *Star Trek* fans, Spock’s admission of love may seem incongruous. The original character of Spock was portrayed as impassive, rarely showing any emotion in accordance with his alien culture. However, Spock as lover was prominently on offer in the 2009 reboot of the

franchise. In this trans-media event, Spock was depicted in a heterosexual romantic relationship with his communications officer, Nyota Uhura. Even so, Spock remains an interesting choice for analysis of arousal because of the denial of this very possibility within *Star Trek*'s diegesis. Therefore, cirrocumulus and jiaren_shadow's taking the character in a direction that runs directly counter to the source text creates the point of departure for this chapter.

THE FINAL FRONTIER

The *Star Trek* media franchise began its life as a television series broadcast on NBC from 1966 to 1969. Created by Gene Roddenberry, the show was set in outer space, premised on the crew of the USS Enterprise exploring and seeking out new life. The original cast of characters was made up of a racially diverse set of humans meant to represent the future success of liberal inclusion. The group was joined by Spock, a half-alien science officer, whose home culture of Vulcan dictated a stringent regimen of emotional control. Despite this seeming lack of feeling, Spock forms an intimate friendship with the ship's captain, Jim Kirk, over the course of the show and it is this relationship that would eventually become a point of interest for cirrocumulus and jiaren_shadow.

The original series was followed by feature films, novels, comic books, and video games that continued the narrative of the original characters, as well as spinoff series introducing new stories, new casts, and new missions. All of this continued to build the popularity of the franchise resulting in a considerable fan base and an ever expanding diegetic universe. The world of the series is depicted as significantly divergent from the US of the 20th and 21st centuries. Economically, new technologies for food replication and scenario simulation have

created post-scarcity conditions, largely nullifying the pursuit of wealth as a primary pursuit. In terms of government, humanity is a part of the United Federation of Planets, a federal republic system that also includes the alien civilizations of the Vulcan, Andorian, and Tellarite peoples. They maintain a military arm known as Starfleet, the members of which drive the core narratives for the majority of the franchise.

The most recent television spinoff was titled *Star Trek: Enterprise* and ran between September 26, 2001 and May 13, 2005. The story focused on the historic period directly preceding the original show but failed to capture the same viewer enthusiasm as previous incarnations. With the last feature film having been released in 2002, the cancelation of *Enterprise* in 2005 marked a lull for the franchise.

In the summer of 2009, a new film was released simply titled *Star Trek*, which took the original set of familiar characters but focused on their lives before the events depicted in the 1960s TV series. By changing key elements of the original timeline, this movie effectively ignored the majority of the previous half century of franchise history. In the vocabulary of cult media, this is often referred to as a reboot. The characters of Spock and Kirk were restored to the big screen, this time played by younger actors who portrayed them at Starfleet Academy before the fateful mission shown in the sixties.

The narrative changes precipitating this new reboot narrative were caused by a time traveling crew of Romulans, a race of aliens often cast as antagonists in *Star Trek*. In the far future of the original show's timeline, their home planet was destroyed but this isolated group was able to move through time in order to exact their revenge on the humans and Vulcans they held responsible for the natural disaster. The group caused two particularly significant historical

changes for the series' characters. First, they killed George Kirk, Jim Kirk's father, at the time of Jim's birth. Second, they destroyed Spock's home world of Vulcan when he was a young adult. These incidents significantly altered the characterization of both protagonists. However, despite these traumas, the familiar crew's younger selves are able to successfully operate the *USS Enterprise* for the first time, defeat the Romulans, and narrowly escape with their lives.

Accompanying the release of this film was a tie-in novel also named *Star Trek* (2009) by Alan Dean Foster. The book expanded the story of the film by adding scenes and expository detail not highlighted on screen. For example, the film opens with Kirk's birth followed by one scene each from Kirk and Spock's childhoods on earth and Vulcan, respectively. The book, however, given the opportunity to stretch the story longer, contains much more exploration of their childhoods. The death of Kirk's father is shown to have had tremendous consequences for his youth, forcing him to grow up with an unloving stepfather while his mother worked on another planet. While this is significantly gestured to in the movie, the book adds scenes in which the young Kirk actually discusses his feelings about his familial situation with his peers. Similarly, though Spock's childhood is largely kept the same between the 1960s television show and the rebooted film, the book gives a more detailed account of the conflict arising from the interracial dynamic of his parents' relationship and also adds the scene of his birth to balance Kirk's.

This novel, in turn, was adapted into an audio book (2009) and made available for purchase as a set of CDs or through digital downloads from iTunes or sites like audible.com. The prose is entirely the same between the print novel and the audio book, but the latter contains an added layer of meaning in the form of narration. The audio version is read by Zachary

Quinto, the actor who portrays the rebooted character of Spock. It is this recording that cirrocumulus and jiaren_shadow cut into in order to alter the story of *Star Trek*, the off screen personage of Zachary Quinto, and the dynamic between Spock and Kirk. The overall framework of the newly rebooted narrative recasts the relationships between the characters, particularly bringing to light a romance between Uhura and Spock, but also rewriting the friendship of Spock and Kirk as a partially antagonistic dynamic. The *Spork* remix plays on the hostility of that relationship as well as the potential closeness evidenced by the original to reinterpret the diegesis and make their rivalry both romantic and sexually charged. In short, jiaren_shadow and cirrocumulus make Kirk and Spock lovers.

Spork! An Erotic Love Story is four steps removed from the original series with the show rebooted by the film, the film becoming the novel, the novel being recorded as audio book, and audio book being remixed. This appropriation was produced and first circulated within the internet communities of slash fandom, a subculture that has long produced transformative fanworks such as fanfiction, fan-made art, and short-form video remixes that posit male-male relationships between characters not canonically cast as such in their various source texts. Narratives of sex and romance between Kirk and Spock from *Star Trek* constitute a particularly good example of this because of the early history of these grassroots media practices. The first widely circulated work of slash fanfiction was based on this relationship. It was titled "A Fragment Out of Time" by Diane Marchant, published in 1974. Though this first story veiled its narrative by leaving the two male characters nameless, its presence in the *Star Trek* fanzine, *Grup 3*, and the flurry of fan activity that followed has made Marchant's intentions clear.

Early Star Trek slash fandom has been partially chronicled in academic work including the ethnography, *Enterprising Women: Television Fandom and the Creation of Popular Myth* (1991), by Camille Bacon-Smith; the cultural studies writing of Henry Jenkins, especially *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* (1992); and the historical and film theory-based work of Francessca Coppa (2006).¹⁰ Before the internet, slash fanfiction was distributed in amateur-published zines, circulated by mailing lists among female fans, and vids were shown with slide projectors and then on VHS tapes at conventions or small fan gatherings. Early narratives often exhibited ambivalence about the desired scenario including the employment of excuses for the two to have sex. One example is the *pon far*, a concept introduced in the original series' first season, episode "Amok Time" (1967). The *pon far* refers to Vulcans' physiological necessity to mate at certain intervals with the consequence of death if it goes unfulfilled. Many slash authors used this to set up scenarios that necessitated sex between the two. In intervening decades, however, slash has grown and expanded, now taking on a multiplicity of source texts and creating narratives as widely varied as other literatures. It is from the tradition of slash, too, that the piece acquires its name. *Spork!* is a combination of the names Spock and Kirk in what is colloquially called a *name smoosh*, a practice which combines the names of lovers in a manner intended to be cute.

In her essay, "Women, Star Trek, and the early development of fannish viding" (2008), Francessca Coppa addresses questions of Spock in relation to fandom and the early development of the audio-visual remix practice of viding. She constructs the historic narrative suggesting that

¹⁰ Coppa has written in several places about the history of early *Star Trek* fandom. One notable example is her essay, "A Brief History of Media Fandom" in Karen Hellekson and Kristina Busse's *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet* (2006: 41).

Star Trek was the show around which vidding originated and Kirk/Spock the pairing around which slash emerged for two related reasons. First, Spock was shown as alien because he related differently to those around him in terms of emotion, a point of identification for many female *Star Trek* fans, many of whom were involved in the sciences and mathematics and thus found themselves minorities as women in male-dominated fields while simultaneously being marked out from other women outside of the workplace. And second, the character of Spock was used to replace an earlier female character, who was also characterized by emotional control in the show's pilot, "The Cage" (1964), thus positioning him as the scar left by a central female protagonist. Regardless of the reason for this initial identification, however, the operation of *jiaren_shadow* and *cirrocumulus* in taking a male-dominated narrative and doing something different with it constitutes a crucial moment of speaking back to the text through remix.

SPORK AS REMIX

Though *Spork* can most easily be situated in relation to the tradition of slash fandom, it might also be usefully categorized as erotic audio remix, a class of amateur texts I have written on in the past (Harrison, 2010; Harrison, 2011). Like fanfiction, erotic audio remixes take known fictional characters or public figures and create new narratives around them. But unlike fanfiction, these texts are always erotic and always audio in medium. The erotic audio remix was first made famous on *The Howard Stern Show* (1975-present) and has slowly taken hold in the read/write culture of the internet, yielding a wealth of audio books and televisual speech tracks transformed into sexual phrases or, at times, entire erotic stories spoken in famous voices. Examples today take on diverse source material including the *Harry Potter* books (1997-2007),

political figures such as Sarah Palin and Bill Clinton, religious figures like Rush Limbaugh, and, indeed, *Star Trek*.

The erotic audio remix gained visibility in the United States in 2008 when country music star, Dolly Parton, expressed shock at having heard a recording of herself making sexually explicit statements that she had never uttered. In actuality, she was listening to manipulated clips from the self-read audio book adaptation of her autobiography, *Dolly: My Life and Other Unfinished Business* (1995). These short remixes were created by *The Howard Stern Show* team and originally aired on radio and television before making their way to youtube.com and other internet sites, which, in turn, caused a media dust up and nearly resulted in a law suit. Parton characterized the *Stern Show* team's work with her oft quoted and now iconic statement: "They have done editing or some sort of trickery to make this horrible, horrible thing."¹¹

In these remixes, the editor takes a digital audio recording and cuts into it, recombining phrases, words, and even individual syllables, twisting the signification to create new narratives spoken in famous voices. For *Spork*, one example is the phrase, "out of the chair," which plays at the 1:48 mark in the remix, but is taken from a scene midway through the audio book. In the original, acting captain Spock castigates his not yet friend, Jim, for sitting in the captain's chair while they are discussing their next move in a strategy to defeat the rogue Romulans. In its repurposed role, however, the phrase takes on a less sardonic reprimanding tone, twisting that valence into a forceful but sensual enticement as Spock commands Kirk to get out of the chair

¹¹ Jonathan Cohen, "Parton 'shocked' at Howard Stern radio segment." Reuters on-line at <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSN1452226220080514>. 14 May 2008. 15 June 2010.

where he's been fellating him ("His tongue encircled the pressure sensitive surface...") so they can have anal sex ("Spock tore into him...").

In terms of individual words, a similar case is that of "instrumentation." In its original context, this term refers to the technical apparatuses of the most advanced spacecraft in Star Fleet's arsenal – the USS *Enterprise*. Here, however, it is redeployed as a euphemism for Kirk's penis: "His mouth moved, sliding repeatedly along the length of his instrumentation." Euphemisms such as "instrumentation" for penis need not always take the place of explicit sexual terms. Despite the fact that such words do not appear as such in the original text, cirrocumulus and jiaren_shadow create the terms, "cock" and "ass," for example, by truncating longer words containing those phonemes.

Compared to other forms of audio remix, *Spork* and erotic audio remixes generally are notable for not introducing outside material whereas music mashups merge pieces of multiple sources and music remixes that reassign generic markers may introduce new instruments. The entire *Spork* audio file is made up of recombined pieces of the source text. This is part of the game of the erotic audio remix. Something external would not maintain the same grain of the voice, disrupting the conceptual goal.

***SPORK* AS SPEECH**

In his essay, "The Grain of the Voice" (1977) Roland Barthes proposes a concept to account for all that which escaped his then purely structuralist conception of communication. His project dealt with opera recordings and attempted to describe the "dual production" of singing voices that generate both language and music (Barthes, 1977: 181). The distinction he

draws between the signification of vocalized words and the “diction of the language,” (Barthes, 1977: 183) “the voluptuousness of its sound signifiers” (Barthes, 1977: 182) begins to account for the specificities of the pleasure offered by an erotic audio remix. This occurs on two registers within *Spork*. The first is in the distinctiveness of the voice speaking sex, which conjures a conception of the speaker’s body for the listener. The second is in the audible tactics of narration used to stimulate listeners.

In an erotic audio remix taken from a speech recording such as those based on political speeches or religious services, the pleasure may come primarily from recognition of the specific way a famous figure speaks. Bill Clinton is certainly such an example. Not only is his voice recognizable, but it is iconic in its unique combination of depth and resonance with Arkansas-accented English. So in Stern’s remix, hearing Clinton’s voice say, “Jennifer Flowers’ tongue smells of Monica Lewinsky’s box,” there may be pleasure from the idea of him uttering this erotic statement as asserted by the specific grain of his voice.¹²

This is true of Quinto as well. As a fan of the actor, myself, this is evident to me particularly in the phrase, “as he met the Vulcan’s gaze,” in the early portion of the piece. He holds each vowel slightly longer than others might, ending in his deep, long pronouncement of the “a” in gaze, in a way I immediately identify with him and with the qualities of his voice I find attractive. It conjures up the image of his physically appealing lips and mouth, opening to make the sound. This mental invocation of his mouth is what Barthes refers to when he characterizes the grain of the voice as “the body of the voice as it sings” (1977: 188). This conjuring of a body, be it the actual body of Zachary Quinto or some divergent imagined version,

¹² Accessed April 9, 2011, from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=apHyhI34fC0>.

locates the erotics of recorded sound and highlights the compulsion that the audience participate in that process by adding the mental conception of the body, themselves, based on the material presented as well as any pre-existing relationship they might have with the content.

Spork! An Erotic Love Story is built partially on a relationship to visuality and visual texts. Both characters were, as mentioned, originally introduced in the moving-image medium of television and the elements of the rebooted narrative being cited debuted on film. However, this piece was first posted as a sound file in *Star Trek* fandom spaces on livejournal.com and then circulated more broadly throughout the internet through imbedded audio players in LGBT spaces, *Trek* sites, and humor blogs. Because *Spork* was adapted from an audio book performance and is structured similarly in terms of a narrated erotic story with characters' actions being described by a disembodied though recognizable third voice, another element of auditory pleasure is present in the way the story is told. Unlike the humor and arousal of Sterne's Clinton simply mentioning the sexual experience of kissing Jennifer Flowers, this Quinto draws out a more elaborate narrative, giving life to other characters. The increase in spoken tempo, for example, between when Spock touches Kirk's chest, and when he is "driven to his knees by overwhelming desire," speaks to a specific vocal tactic the remix artists are creating through Quinto. Similarly functioning are the groans Quinto, jiaren_shadow, and cirrocumulus simulate for Kirk, the increasingly emphatic repetition of "yes" before Kirk ejaculates, the gargle as Spock swallows Kirk's semen, and even the character-consistent word choices such as "explication," which precisely invokes the personality of Spock when he is meant to be speaking.

Although Barthes intended the grain of the voice to elucidate the emotional geography of singing, I have attempted to show that it applies equally to recorded speech, wherein the specificities of tone and diction, and the body implied by a specific familiar voice has meaning that resonates beyond words as conjoined signifying syllables. In what follows, I will take this further, thinking about what it means for this vocal grain to be mobilized specifically for the purpose of arousal as pornography.

SPORK AS PORN

Academic work on pornography has tended to suffer a similar fate to that of remix. Because of the controversial nature of the topic, the discussions playing out in the pages of scholarship have been drawn always to the question of whether it should exist at all rather than probing deeper questions about the meanings being made therein. The exception to this rule that launched a newly focused area of inquiry for the humanities one might call critical pornography studies was Linda Williams' first full-length text on the topic, *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the "Frenzy of the Visible"* (1989). Published in 1989, this text marked a significant moment for opening up the possibility of academic discourse on pornographic media with its goal "to trace the meaning and function of the genre of pornography in its specific, visual, cinematic form" (Williams, 1989: 3).

Though predating the academic popularization of the term affect or formulations like Rai's "ecologies of sensation," this book concerns itself with both, positioning pornography and its primary use for aid in achieving orgasm along with films that elicit other particularly clear bodily reactions such as the gasps of horror or the tears of the weepie, Williams seeks to frame

all of this in terms of the structures encouraging sensation within the film. She writes, “Goose bumps, tears, laughter, and arousal may occur, may seem like reflexes but they are all culturally mediated” (Williams, 1989: 5). This has important affinities with my work with the bodily analytics of affective assemblage. She also touches on the mobility between sensations, writing of US Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart’s statements on pornography that he meant to indicate “‘It moves me’ (whether to arousal or outrage hardly matters).” By showing how the same structures yield different but related sensations, Williams underscores one of the methodological barriers this thesis has to engage with.

However, even in Williams’ book, the topic was narrowed to this very slim sliver of what might otherwise have been a more mobile nuanced definition of the genre. Here again as elsewhere in the humanities, we see the hegemony of the visual. Williams defines her field in terms of filmic hardcore with the title of the book even including the phrase, “The frenzy of the visible.” Of course, it is hardly her fault as the pre-existing non-academic discourse on pornography operates under similar conditions. Supreme court Justice Potter’s abovementioned statements on pornography included the proscription, “I know it when I see it,” implying that he would not engage with it auditorily.

Even the word, pornography contains the visual, being traced to the Greek, *pornei* for prostitutes and *graphos* for writing. Writing on prostitutes, then, stands in stark contrast to *Spork! An Erotic Love Story* in two ways, its focus on the viscosity of writing and the relationship with the commerciality of sex work. But this text is not circulated as a commodity, nor is it visual. These important differences resonate throughout Williams’ book, particularly as she locates the originary moment for the form in the earliest filmic experiments which sought to

reveal and examine the human body through recording technologies' enhancement of the human eye. Erotic audio remixes and other forms of erotic recorded sound open up new questions then as offshoots of this discourse on pornography. Though this chapter launches more queries than it ultimately answers, in what follows the structures of arousal in *Spork* begins to redress this imbalance.

INTERSECTIONS: GENDER & SEX

In assembling the script for *Spork! An Erotic Love Story*, cirrocumulus and jiaren_shadow elect to include the word, gaze, early in the sound file. As Spock approaches Kirk sitting in the command chair, consumers hear Quinto's voice describe Kirk as looking up to meet the Vulcan's gaze. As he does so, one of Spock's eyebrows rises, gesturing toward his intended transgression. This moment, however, is significant in its reworking of the male gaze as operating on other men.¹³

Mulvey describes the form of classic Hollywood cinema as encouraging consumers to identify with male characters on screen by always positioning the look of the camera as that of the male filmic bodies. In the case of film, the look of the camera mediates between the profilmic event and consumptive audiences. Parallel to the look of the camera for this audio book is the narrating voice, in this case, the voice of Zachary Quinto. Like the look of the

¹³ This reading of *Spork – An Erotic Love Story* shares some affinities with sociological theorizations of slash fandom broadly that offer simplistic explanations of female desire for male-male narratives of sex and romance based on the invisibility of women in cult media franchises. This reading, however, is not meant to offer explanation for the desire to create this or any other slash narrative. Rather, it reads the reworking of the gaze as an effect of that reworking without intending an explanation of the cause.

camera, the listening subject can only hear the details of the scene described by Quinto. This limited scenic access is a form of directed listening. In what follows I examine the operation of Zachary Quinto's voice, both as a gendered threshold of access and in terms of the androcentric details chosen for inclusion. This stands in comparison to a remix in which the masculine domination is reworked to redirect our listening to an alternative possibility built out of this male domination.

One of the central tenets of the *Star Trek* franchise has been a presentation of a brighter future in which the liberal agenda of diversity and inclusion has had significant success. In the original program this meant showing harmony among humans of multiple races at a time when the US was embroiled in the Civil Rights movement. Gender has also been central, especially notable in the character of Captain Kathryn Janeway, the starship's captain in the fourth television series, *Star Trek: Voyager* (1995-2001). However, in 2009, when the franchise was rebooted with the *Star Trek* film, novel, and audio book, representations of strong women were, to a significant degree, lost as a central goal.

In the film, very few women are described at all. Kirk's mother gives birth in the very beginning; Spock's mother, Amanda, appears briefly in two scenes; Gaila, a female alien Starfleet cadet, is described as having sex with Kirk in order to exhibit his sexual prowess; and, most notably, Uhura, whom Kirk hits on and with whom Spock is romantically involved, but who also plays a major role in advancing the plot. With such a limited female cast, it is no surprise that one of the actresses was not selected to narrate the audio book. Ultimately, Zachary Quinto was cast, but this decision functions very differently for the audio book and the remix. For the original, this selection means that every detail of the story is mediated through a male

voice. Although consumers are not being sutured directly into the gaze of a male character such as with Mulvey's gaze vis-à-vis the phallic camera, Quinto's voice is still offered up as the point of identification.

This does not necessarily limit individual women in accessing the text. It is not as though the vocal character of Quinto's male voice biologically limits women's listening. However, as a textual form, I read this gendered voice as never the less creating a situation like Mulvey's in which identifying with the male voice takes on a particular normalizing cultural valence. Accessing the text through a male voice becomes parallel to issues of access throughout a society operating under patriarchy. Listening to this text means adjusting to an assumed male center.

This reading rings particularly true in its resonance with the details that are included. Though it need not be so, the male-narration of the novel corresponds with the exclusion of women's contributions to the achievements, or, indeed, any of the actions of the story, with the notable but singular exception of Uhura. This interestingly gels with Mulvey's diagnosis that men drive the action of films while women are simply meant to be looked at. In this audio book, when women cannot be looked at, they drop out of the story almost altogether. In the remix, however, this is turned on its head as cirrocmulus and jiaren_shadow take the male-dominated male-narrated narrative and use it to create something new, something that serves their desires in a specific way. By rewriting the narrative and creating a Spock and a Kirk in love, and a Zachary Quinto who narrates a male-male erotic story, the two female remix artists redirect listeners to their own creation with new points of entry.

In creating a scene of male-male erotics out of a scene that lacked women, jiaren_shadow and cirrocmulus open up the possibility of something new. Though listeners still access the

scene through the gendered male voice, rather than being a sieve for detail inclusion, the voice becomes part of the erotic performance. The patriarchal norm of men talking to men and sometimes to women about their adventures is reconceptualized as men talking to all those interested in this particular kind of sex about what they want to hear. Rather than simply being a mediating mechanism for those accessing the text with a particular normalizing valence for some who might desire that access the voice itself becomes part of the pleasure. For fans of the film and fans of the rebooted character of Spock, the grain of Quinto's is poised to contribute to the experience of listening to this erotic story. The usual even keel precision of the Spock tone, for example, creates the conditions for marked pleasure in moments when that veneer is cracked. One such moment is when Spock is administering fellatio on Kirk and Quinto speaks: "Kirk let himself slide a little lower in the chair." "Little lower in the chair" takes on a song-like rhythm with a self-satisfied tone as if to indicate the physical pleasure he is receiving. However, even this small vocal nod to sexual gratification that cirrocumulus and jiaren_shadow set up through Quinto significantly enhances the erotic qualities of the piece. It is through this eroticization of Quinto's voice then that its function becomes apparent in the original. When it is made the tool of female desire, its specificity as male becomes legible rather than standing as the unmarked default male center of the original audio book.

ASSEMBLAGE & SENSATION: AROUSAL

In the first reading above, the movement from Quinto's voice as unmarked male center of the text and mediating perspective of directed listening to sexualized element of erotica, marks out related terrain to what happens in the shift between forms of arousal. However, it is useful to

shift the framework from intersectional identity analysis to that of the affective assemblage in order to capture flows of sensation without being pinned down to identity markers of gender or sexual orientation. In this section I propose to examine the multiple sensations of arousal these texts encourage in their listeners.

I propose that the original *Star Trek* audio book, written by Alan Dean Foster and recorded by Zachary Quinto is structured and poised to cause a particular sensation of arousal associated with its action and adventure elements. Take for example, the following scene in chapter fifteen.¹⁴ The young Jim Kirk and Montgomery Scott are beamed from an arctic outpost on the planet Delta Vega back to the USS *Enterprise* in order to convince acting Captain Spock that he has been emotionally compromised by the death of his mother and the destruction of his home planet and is therefore unable to make the most effective decisions about how to proceed in fighting the Romulan mining crew. From their point of view the mode of transport was risky as it was the first time in history an attempt had been made to beam aboard a moving spacecraft. Therefore, upon arriving intact, Kirk is relieved. However, taking stock of the situation, he realizes that despite their success, Kirk is missing his traveling companion. Nascent panic begins to accumulate in the narrating voice of Zachary Quinto. Kirk looks around wildly but does not spot his friend. Finally, he realizes what has happened. Scott was, indeed, transported aboard the *Enterprise*. The space coordinates were not wrong. However, by happenstance, the very place he was beamed to was in the middle of a fluid-filled cooling tank. Tension suddenly shoots through the scene as the material separating them is banged with fists. Kirk struggles first with

¹⁴ I do not give page numbers because this is in reference to the audio book. In the single track audible.com edition, however, chapter fifteen begins in the sixth hour of the recording.

at the barrier and then with a computer console. The pressure in the tank suddenly shoots Scotty's body upwards into a cross-wise conduit. Kirk pursues him, watching as his cheeks bulge and he struggles for air, before the computer is finally overridden and the scene's tension is expelled in an exhale of relief.

I am particularly struck by the line in this scene when Quinto reads, "Racing along below, a frantic Kirk looked ahead in search of an access." I too am interested in how one is meant to access this scene. It seems clear, however, that the complicating of this otherwise quotidian story of intergalactic transport serves as representation of the reading of the text overall, one that leads its listeners through the scenes by the emotional hook of action-oriented arousal. The tension and excitement of the scene is audible in Quinto's voice, thus indicating this structuring both in terms of specific audibility and the choices made around detail inclusion.

The same may be said of the remix text, which also leads its listeners through its narrative using structures for a specific sensation – that of sexual arousal. This represents a redirection from the original. As mentioned, this takes place by redirecting our listening to words, phrases, and sentences taken out of order from their original place in the narrative. Comparing *Spork* with the above outlined scene of adventure, the possibility of an erotic Star Trek makes clear how the original text could easily go in another direction. This scene contains key words that might be repurposed for a sexual situation – words related to the fluid, and the rising tension as Kirk realizes the problem. The grain of Quinto's voice as that tension rises might also easily slip into an erotic repurposing.

Even as this reveals how easily there might be slippage between this scene and one of erotica, the very same slippage shows how a consumer of *Spork* might ultimately hear something

different. This is because, as Massumi points out, “Feelings have a way of folding into each other” (2002: 1). As *Spork* circulated the internet, it was evident that many of its consumers found it humorous rather than arousing, illustrating the futility of analyzing reactions to these texts based on the formal body alone. Rather, all we can do is read them for structures that suggest readings.

CONCLUSION: REMIXING THE TEXTUAL BODY, EXPLODING THE CONCEPTUAL BODY

In the conclusion of *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*, Jasbir Puar invokes the figure of the suicide bomber and the literal destruction of their body in order to theoretically explode scholarly notions of subjectivity and identity. Her framework of bodily assemblage places individual bodies in a network of affective flows, assembling and reassembling with other flesh bodies, media bodies, and the world around it. The bodily destruction of the suicide bomber represents the outer limit of this theory with that body literally blown apart, becoming separating flows of flesh and blood as well as affect.

This examination of the *Spork! An Erotic Love Story* achieves a similar albeit less violent end. If the grain of the voice implies the body of the speaker as Barthes (1977) suggested, Zachary Quinto is conjured very differently by the recording of Alan Dean Foster’s *Star Trek* the remix of jiaeren_shadow and cirrocumulus’ remix. The first is a respected young actor who got a big break in his role as Spock in the 2009 *Star Trek* film. That might still be true of the second, but his position as narrating a male-male erotic story certainly shakes up the image that has been projected by publicists. On the other hand, it might confirm what some fans

already think they know about his sexual orientation. The existence of these two Quintos draws attention to how much we already don't know about either of them.

The coexistence of these two Quintos as well as the innumerable others made possible by remix technology effectively shatter conceptions of the actor as a coherent individual subject. The same can be said of the characters. Many of us know a Kirk and Spock who do not have sex with men. Spock, in particular, is portrayed as exercising deep control over his emotions and impulses. However, then again, Kirk and Spock have always been multiple: created by Gene Roddenberry but written by many official writers and fan writers before the screenwriters of the 2009 film, before Alan Dean Foster, and before cirrocululus and jiaren_shadow reworked their bodies. Showing the parallels between the explosion of the actor's (Quinto) body and that of the character (Spock) underlines the importance of fictional bodies within the assemblage model. Despite not being made of flesh, fictional bodies never the less become points of reassemblage and affective flow for people who are.

This brings us to the final exploding body – that of the text, itself. Not only are there many Quintos and many Spocks, but many *Star Treks*. In this chapter alone we have touched on the *Star Trek* of the *Grup* fanzine (1972-unknown), the *Star Trek* of the original series, the *Star Trek* of the rebooted film franchise, the *Star Trek* of the novel, the *Star Trek* of the audio book, and the *Star Trek* in work of jiaren_shadow and cirrocululus. Like the bodies of the characters, the body of the text becomes imbricated in our own existence as we connect with its multiple flows of sensation, and reassemble ourselves with pieces of it.

This takes place in singular ways through hearing as well as the other senses. The grain of the voice and the directive cultural and textual forms of recorded speech create the conditions

for certain kinds of interactions with text suggesting how we will reassemble with them. In illustrating the way that *Spork* reveals its source text in the form of the Zachary Quinto-narrated audio book from Howard Dean Foster's *Star Trek* novelization, I have also shown an example of the historic shift in listening represented by remix culture. In *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (2000), Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin suggest that remix reveals the apparatus with which media is created. I have similarly shown how remix reveals the specificities of directed listening. As a result, contemporary listening is being changed by the increasingly present awareness that any audio text one hears, any piece of recorded sound could be manipulated to be other than it is. When one hears a text that erases the details in which a consumer is interested—be that the experience of a supporting character in a spoken narrative or the specificities of certain instruments in a musical composition—the reality that the original did not have to be created that way and might still be recreated to be different hangs over the text.

CHAPTER 2: “LADY GAGA 'ALEJANDRO' MUSIC VIDEO FEATURING ACE OF BASE!”

“Rosas, rosas,” a woman peddling flowers calls out to a neighborhood. “Rosas, para tu amor.” Light, romantic music plays, and a man turns to face the camera. He blows a kiss, his shirt opening to reveal his abdominal muscles. He runs his finger through his long curly hair. He offers a bouquet of the flower vendor’s roses to the camera. Suddenly, the music cuts to the sound of a car coming to a screeching halt. Lady Gaga’s face fills the screen, contorted into a look of pain. She is draped in long spans of thin white fabric resembling toilet paper. Gaga speaks, “I know that you are hung and I know that you want to [censored noise] me, pero I don’t want anybody to think I’m a whore. Alleluia.” The music for Gaga’s “Alejandro” begins and the video takes off. But though the music remains mostly the same, changes to the lyrics become immediately apparent. Where Gaga usually sings about rejection, interspersed with Latino names and a few Spanish phrases such as, “en su bosillo,” here she uses Chicano/a English, a dialect with Hispanicized pronunciations of English words interspersed with Spanish. Though much of the same thematic ground is covered – sexuality, homage, fame – these explorations are littered with visual and audible references to Latino/a culture such as the Virgin of Guadalupe; votive candles; New York Yankees third baseman, Alex Rodriguez; and international soccer stars. Having already asked who Spock, Kirk, and Zachary Quinto are, this video begs us to ask the question: Who is Lady Gaga?

Gaga’s rise to fame took place rapidly. From the time she released her first single “Just Dance” in 2008 to the launch of her highly anticipated EP, *The Fame Monster*, in 2009, the US market thoroughly learned her act. No one is surprised to see Lady Gaga paying homage to US pop music from the 1990s. It has become expected that she fight with her musical rival, MIA.

Discussions of sex and analysis of celebrity culture are mainstays of her lyrics and interview responses, and she is never caught wearing something ordinary. But does Lady Gaga use Chicano/a English? Does she usually make reference to Latino sports stars? She does in “Lady GaGa 'Alejandro' music video featuring Ace of Base!” but the credits attribute this performance to another artist as writer and star.

This chapter *listens* to a video by comedienne and performance artist, La Coacha. Coacha’s short-form internet videos have parodied popular culture texts and figures including Britney Spears, Nicki Minaj, Beyoncé Knowles, and *Keeping Up with the Kardashians* (2007-present). Here she takes on the 2010 US summer megahit, “Alejandro,” by Lady Gaga, which became the artist’s seventh successive release to reach the *Billboard* Hot 100’s top ten list. In response to the song, La Coacha released, “Lady GaGa 'Alejandro' music video featuring Ace of Base!” the title of which appropriately captures the labeling conventions of contemporary internet video.

The video opens on a scene of a notably unspecified location. Is this the Mexico Gaga references as being hot in the original “Alejandro?” Or is this Latino/a America? The man La Coacha speaks to stands in for the figure of the Latin lover. Together, they lampoon Gaga’s inconsistent attitudes toward sex, particularly in terms of miscegenation, with an intersectional analysis of the gender, race, and sexuality, finally they spin into greater questions of pastiche and fame.

The performance was originally posted May 26th, 2010, on La Coacha's blog, *Chisme Time*, and producer Perez Hilton's youtube account.¹⁵ It has primarily circulated in video format although .mp3 audio-only files have also been created. In keeping with this thesis' focus on sound, however, the majority of the analysis in this chapter brackets out the moving images in favor of hearing the music and speech on their own. Though it is not useful to ignore the visual dimension entirely, I emphasize when and how La Coacha's cultural work is operationalized in the auditory register.

This chapter first traces Gaga's rise to fame leading up to her release of "Alejandro." Second, it reads the audio of "Lady GaGa 'Alejandro' music video featuring Ace of Base!" as remix. It connects La Coacha's work to the tradition of Latino/a critique that does not take an essential raced self as its foundation, before moving through a reading of the redirected listening of intersectionality and affect. The chapter closes with a discussion of the two bodily frameworks of intersectional subjectivity and affective assemblage and how they complement one another in La Coacha's piece.

GAGA OOH LA LA

In the summer of 2010 pop music artist, Lady Gaga, released her latest single, "Alejandro," the third song to be launched from her 2009 EP, *The Fame Monster*. The track subsequently became the artist's seventh successive release to reach the *Billboard* Hot 100's top ten list and grew to be one of the summer's most celebrated pop anthems in the United States.

¹⁵ Accessed April 9, 2011 from <http://chismetime.com/2010/05/la-coachas-parody-of-lady-gagas-alejandro/> and http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Xwawlh_GCE

This was a crucial moment in Gaga's career, following the massive success of her prior two hits, "Bad Romance" and "Telephone." What follows in this section traces her rise to fame and the consolidation of some of the major themes orbiting around Gaga's public persona.

Before becoming an internationally famous pop star, Stefani Joanne Angelina Germanotta studied at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, she became active in the city's Lower East Side club and neo-burlesque scenes, and it was during this period of her life that she and Rob Fusari, music producer and friend, created the pseudonym, Lady Gaga. They based the moniker on the lyrics to Queen's "Radio Ga Ga" (1984), due to the affinities she shared with Freddie Mercury. It was also during this time that she and interlocutor, Lady Starlight, began to develop the glam rock-inspired character and the avant-garde-inflected outré fashions that would come to define her public persona in later years.

After signing with Interscope records and Akon's Kon Live Distribution, Lady Gaga burst onto the pop music scene in 2008 with her first album, *The Fame*, and first single, "Just Dance," which reached the top of the US pop charts. This was followed by "Poker Face" (2008), an even greater success, which won her "Best Dance Recording" at the 52nd Annual Grammy Awards. In 2009, Gaga released the music video for "Paparazzi," her first production to significantly exceed the contemporary norms of the genre. The video is nearly eight minutes long, with scenes prior to, after, and during the song, itself, that are not accented by music. Created by Swedish director, Jonas Åkerlund, the story explores the violence of fame, which is particularly literalized in the explicit cut of the piece featuring shot after shot of dead bodies.

That year also marked the beginnings of Gaga's advocacy for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender civil rights. That fall she performed John Lennon's "Imagine" (1971) at the Human

Rights Campaign Dinner and participated in the National Equality March on the national mall. Gaga has identified her own sexual identity as bi, declaring that one meaning of the “Poker Face” narrative was about having women-centered sexual fantasies while having sex with men.

Following “Paparazzi,” her video and single, “Bad Romance” (2009) was released just before *The Fame Monster* (2009) and took Lady Gaga to the next level of artistic exposure. In the six months following its release, “Bad Romance,” directed by Francis Lawrence, became the most viewed clip on youtube.com, surpassing perennial comedy favorite, “Charlie Bit My Finger” (2007), and eventually becoming the first video on the site to pass 200 million hits.¹⁶ Gaga the first to receive over one billion hits total on her youtube content altogether.¹⁷

Her last release before “Alejandro” was “Telephone” (2010) a collaboration with Beyoncé whose highly filmic video attracted less attention than its forerunner, but nevertheless made it to the top ten on the pop charts and continued her explorations of gender, sex, monstrosity, and death. In the video, the two women are shown getting out of a women’s prison only to roam the country in their vehicle, The Pussy Wagon, poisoning men around the country.

This brings the story of Gaga back to “Alejandro.” Released April 20, 2010 for radio play, the narrative of the lyrics have been the source of much confusion, interpretation, and conjecture. Gaga has described it as being based on her fear of sex and about breaking up with former lovers, while rumors and readings have also circulated that it details her experiences of unwanted sexual advances from men in dance clubs in Latin America. Ultimately, each of these

¹⁶ Accessed April 9, 2011 from <http://www.businessinsider.com/lady-gagas-bad-romance-will-be-youtubes-first-video-to-200-million-views-2010-5> and http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_OBlgSz8sSM

¹⁷ Accessed April 9, 2011 from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsbeat/11626592>

interpretations are textured into La Coacha's piece with the third providing a particularly salient point of departure.

Gaga dedicated the song to her gay fans and created a music video which significantly veered from any story contained in the words Gaga actually sings. Directed by Steven Klein, the moving image piece engaged with two major issues of gay civil rights in the United States. The first was the policy of Don't Ask, Don't Tell, which banned lesbian, gay, and bisexual service members from serving openly in the US military, though the law has since been repealed. The second was the range of issues related to sexual orientation, Christianity, and the Church. Finally, Gaga has also described the video as an exploration of her position as a gay male pop icon. Notably, despite her use of the Latino/Latin American names, Roberto, Fernando, and Alejandro in the lyrics, none of the video's male bodies are presented as other than white.

“ALEJANDRO” AS REMIX

Lady Gaga's "Alejandro" music video was released on April 30, 2010. However, four days prior, La Coacha released what she had envisioned in the form of her own "Alejandro" remix. Unlike *Spork*, in which a single text was cut up and the pieces recombined to create something new, "Lady GaGa 'Alejandro' music video featuring Ace of Base!" draws directly on a wide variety of sources. The music is primarily structured around Lady Gaga's "Alejandro," but hints of four other songs are interwoven throughout, each eventually being brought to the fore in specific passages. All four were noted influences on Lady Gaga and the creation of "Alejandro" in particular – Madonna's "La Isla Bonita" (1987) as well as "All that She Wants" (1992), "I Saw the Sign" (1994) and "Don't Turn Around" (1994) by Ace of Base.

La Coacha's video begins with an opening sequence whose music is entirely original. The "Alejandro" prologue plays at 0:17. At the 29 second mark, the main Gaga theme begins, and shortly after, the subtle gestures to Madonna and Ace of Base become audible as well. At 2:06, the Gaga song transitions into "La Isla Bonita" for about 30 seconds with lyrics and music that cite Madonna directly. Then at 3:31, the hints of Ace of Base come to the fore with the music and original lyrics of "Don't Turn Around," "I Saw the Sign" at 3:52, and "All That She Wants," at 4:12. The piece closes with the voice of Jenny Berggren, formerly of Ace of Base, at 4:22. Berggren lauds Gaga and tells La Coacha that she has been a "very bad girl." In the closing, La Coacha asks Gaga as the Virgin of Guadalupe for forgiveness for her sins in reference to the creation of the video.

However, other artists, songs, albums, and genres are invoked both lyrically and musically within the intertextual tapestry of the piece. These notably include Abba, whose song, "Fernando" (1976), is invoked by name in "Alejandro," and whose influences are felt through the music of their co-national Swedes, Ace of Base. The narrative also touches on MIA, with whom Gaga has had an ongoing feud over the question of originality. Here, however, Coacha as Gaga turns the critical spotlight against her by drawing out the influence of the Wreckx-n-Effect song, "Rump Shaker" (1992) on MIA. Additionally, La Coacha audibly gestures to Gaga's prior hit, "Telephone," borrowing a cash register sound effect prominently employed in the earlier music video.

These citations resonate with the remix practice of mash up, which combines elements of multiple texts to create something new. The piece also has affinities with the concept of a cover or interpolation, and the practice of parody, which extends far beyond recorded sound and

outside of audio culture altogether. Reading this work as a parodic mashup, wherein two or more songs are mixed together in order to create dialogue between the texts, reveals a particular reading of Gaga being brought together with her influences. In this case, La Coacha explicitly brings Madonna into the picture. La Coacha underscores how Madonna has been an influence not just musically but in terms of theme with “La Isla Bonita” taking place in the Hispanophone Caribbean much like Gaga’s references to Mexico and Latin America here. Though Madonna is the only artist explicitly cited, this move gestures to a longer vexed history of Latino/a and Latin American use in pop music. With Ace of Base, the dialogue La Coacha sets up operates more in the form of manifesto, framing her own project of remixing within a longer chain of appropriation that extends back beyond Gaga, touching Ace of Base, Abba, and others.

The distinction between a cover and an interpolation has been eroded by colloquial usage. If the former once meant a live performance of someone else’s song and the latter referred to a partial or wholesale rerecording, the two operate interchangeably today to indicate the use of another artist’s material. Such a move may or may not involve significant changes to the lyrics or music, but it always indexes a change in that the new artist or artist are bringing themselves to the material, setting up a kind of dialogue similar to the mashup. In this case, La Coacha’s performing Gaga takes the song in a significant new direction. Of course, the lyrics are substantially changed and elements of parody are introduced, using the appropriated material for a comic take on the original, but all of this constitutes a new direction for the life of the piece in terms of Coacha’s greater reading.

Lady Gaga began to take her song in the direction of LGBT issues at a crucial moment in the life of the text. The song had been circulating for several months as the second track on her

EP, *The Fame Monster*, but very little extra-textual extrapolation had taken place. It was when she created the music video and began doing live appearances to promote the single that these new themes were introduced. However, it is my contention that in creating her response, La Coacha sought to redistribute the attention being paid to this text, moving primarily to the audio in order to understand the meaning being made in this trans-media event. I shall examine both the music and the lyrics in her response.

“ALEJANDRO” AS LATINIDAD

Before beginning to read La Coacha’s commentary on race in “Alejandro,” it is necessary to contextualize this analysis within existing critical paradigms for thinking about Latinidad. This thesis seeks to wed identitarian intersectionality with assemblage-based criticism in order to account for both bodily movement and stasis. To that end, Latinidad is a particularly appropriate example because of its history of being invoked as a racial and ethnic category while constantly being confronted with its inherent non-coherence.

This tension becomes apparent even in the controversies around the ethnonyms of Latino/a and Hispanic. The term Hispanic was first used in 1970 as a category on the US census to indicate “a person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.”¹⁸ Latino was added to the census in 2000 with some claiming it as a term taken from the self-identification of Latin American immigrants and their descendant rather than being a term imposed by disciplinary mechanisms of the state. Others have championed Latino for its potential broad applicability for all those from Latin

¹⁸ Accessed April 9, 2011 from http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/fedreg_1997standards.

America. However, all claims in this debate are contested, leaving a notably heterogeneous landscape of individuals using different terms to refer to themselves and ever shifting groups of other people.

US Latino/a populations have thus consistently vexed the efforts of the US Census Bureau whose attempts to capture our numbers change rapidly, always with only partial success. Beyond the terms, questions emerge around Afro-Latino/as and those from Latin America but of recent white European immigrant stock. Even a census question like the one in 2010 that asks race separately from Latino/Hispanic heritage cannot make the distinction between a Black Dominican American who checks both Hispanic/Latino and Black and the biracial respondent with one parent who is African American and one who is Latino/a.

Even if an ethnonym could be agreed upon, who exactly that term would refer to would remain in question. In her project of thinking Latinidad as rhizomatic, a concept from Deleuze and Guattari closely related to the assemblage, Juana Rodríguez (2003) notes the lack of any coherent definition for the identity by setting up, interrogating, and partially eliminating the possibilities of geographic, national, linguistic, colonial, phenotypic and historical definitions (10-16). This is to say, for example, that one cannot assign the label, “Latino/a,” to all those whose heritage links them to territory colonized by the Spanish because this would include the Phillippines, nor can one point to the Spanish language because of the multiple indigenous languages that also hold meaningful positions for Latino/a Americans.

This theme of non-coherence appears repeatedly in Latino/a writing. Gloria Anzaldúa writes of her ambivalent mosaic existence as a queer Latina in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (2007), and Richard Rodriguez speaks of the “browning of America” in *Brown:*

The Last Discovery of America (2003). Rodriguez uses the phrase to point to the increase in mixed race bodies in the US, a condition ever present in Latin America with the multiple mixing ancestries of indigenous Americans, Spanish and other European colonists, Black slaves, and more recent immigrants from all over the world.

Clara Rodriguez explores these questions of race, ethnicity, national origin, self-identification and networks of affinity further in *Changing Race: Latinos, the Census and the History of Ethnicity* (2000). Because of all this complexity, affinities among actual Latino/a bodies have always occurred in individual temporally delimited moments, not contingent on any static shared characteristics. This underscoring of its status as irreducible to any specific set of assumptions positions Latinidad as particularly poised for this work, at once intersectional and more than intersectional.

INTERSECTIONS: RACE & SEX

This section offers my reading of the intersectional work La Coacha undertakes vis-a-vis Lady Gaga's "Alejandro," staged in terms of race, gender, and sexuality largely in the early portion of the video. I particularly flesh out the manner in which La Coacha suggests that fear of miscegenation motivates Gaga's horrified rejection of the men in this song where she is elsewhere sex-positive. It then turns back to Gaga's original in order to show how this exploration makes apparent the function of Gaga's raced voice and how her fame has helped to propagate this narrative, a turn away from the elements of celebrity culture she regularly emphasizes. In this section, the transcription of Coacha as Gaga's words are taken from the

subtitles in an attempts to preserve her pronunciation. They are followed by bracketed clarification of the non-standard spelling and Spanish terms.

The reading of “Alejandro” that suggests Gaga as a young white woman surrounded by over attentive Latino/Latin American men in a dance club relies partially on the male gaze. The lyrics describe a woman with both hands in her pockets, presumably hanging out at the margins of the space. She avoids the attention of the men around her by refusing to acknowledge their gaze as indicated in the line, “...but she won’t look at you, won’t look at you.” Sound and hearing, however, enter this scene’s same dynamic in the chorus – “Don’t call my name, don’t call my name, Alejandro.” This is followed by, “I’m not your babe, I’m not your babe, Fernando,” presumably in response to her being audibly addressed as “babe.” A third sense, that of touch, is also mentioned, “Don’t want to kiss, don’t want to touch,” followed by more of the audible, “Just smoke one cigarette and hush; don’t call my name, don’t call my name, Roberto.”

In this way, Gaga casts herself in the role of the wallflower being made the object of unwanted visual, vocal, and tactile attention by men with Latino/Latin American names. “Alejandro” thus harkens back to Mulvey as a narrative of a woman being made the object of the sexualized male gaze. Of course, I want to be clear that unwanted touching by anyone in any location is something to be rigorously opposed. However, two elements of this story are missing. The first is, quite simply, race. The distinction between this situation and the dynamics of the films Mulvey discusses lie in questions of interracial interaction and white privilege, which intersect with the gender analysis she offers. The second is how the extra-narrative circulation under the sign of Gaga shifts the signification and stakes of this story. How does this compare with Gaga’s other work? Why tell such a tale?

Enter La Coacha, whose opening line makes clear the reformulation she proposes and the way she is consequently redirecting our listening. She says to the figure of the Latin lover, “I know that you are hung and I know that you want to [censored noise] me, but I don’t want anybody to think I’m a whore. Alleluia.” Coacha’s implication immediately is that Gaga was actually interested in those men by offering her desire not to be cast as a whore as the primary excuse for her disinterest. Regardless of its veracity, this assertion reopens that possibility in order to reread “Alejandro.” Coacha as Gaga’s aversion to being labeled a whore also opens up new questions. Why might this happen? Is it related to these particular men? And, is it so black and white that she must either a virgin, as here emblemized by the Virgin of Guadalupe and her word, “Alleluia,” or a whore?

In order to answer these questions, when the main “Alejandro” theme begins, La Coacha takes her listeners on a wider survey of Lady Gaga’s public persona. Coacha as Gaga displays herself and sings autobiographically, “I kiss ‘muchachas’” [I kiss women], in reference to Gaga’s bisexuality and photos of her kissing women, “And I chake my nalgas” [I shake my ass], gesturing to her sometimes scanty costumes and sexual dance moves, “Pero, I only do it for pooblicity” [But I only do it for publicity]. In this last phrase, the argument starts to become clear. By cheekily suggesting that the amount of sex circulating around Gaga might in fact only amount to a publicity stunt, La Coacha builds a mock excuse for why she might be so horrified by Latino/Latin American men hitting on her. She continues, “Cuz the real Lady God-ga is a holy chica and I like to preash about celibacy” [‘cause the real Lady God-ga is a holy chic and I

like to preach about celibacy]. This, too, is true. In April of 2010, Gaga stated in an interview that she is celibate and advised her fans, “Don't have sex.”¹⁹

The picture La Coacha paints is one in which Gaga is at the center of an inconsistent sexual narrative. This is somewhat problematic because of how hard feminists have fought to remove the immediate implication that sexual desire can be read by revealing clothing and sexualized dancing, particularly in disputed narratives of sexual assault. La Coacha gestures towards these problems in her citation of the virgin/whore dichotomy, suggesting that she is sensitive to how this ambivalence is always already imbricated with womanhood, but she still wants to continue in order to make another argument. And it is still a fair reading to say that sexuality holds an ambivalent position for Gaga as a cultural phenomenon with racialized specificities for Gaga's disapproval. She sings in “Poker Face” about fantasizing about sex with women while having sex with men and declares her desire to “take a ride on your disco stick” in “LoveGame” (2009). Yet she is horrified by the flirtations of men of color in “Alejandro.”

La Coacha's opening line clarifies further her reading of this attitude. In suggesting that she knows “that you are hung,” La Coacha gestures towards the hyper sexualization of Black and Latino/Latin American men through the synecdoche of the large penis. This sexualization of their bodies is extrapolated onto having sex with them. In other words, Gaga is in more danger than ever of being cast as whore if she sleeps with these particular men because of the hyper sexualization and the taboo of miscegenation.

¹⁹ Accessed April 9, 2011, from <http://www.mtv.com/news/articles/1635862/lady-gaga-shes-celibate-fans-should-be.jhtml>.

This reading reveals is the place of the raced voice in “Alejandro.” Much like the voice of Zachary Quinto gendered the perspective of the scenes described in the *Star Trek* audio book, so too does the Gaga’s race affect her perspective and thus the focus of this narrative. We set up the auditory analogue of Mulvey’s subjective camera in front of Gaga such that her racialized perspective is the only one on offer. This results in a questionable politics of race as Gaga places all her emphasis on gender and sexuality. Returning to “Alejandro” and its circulation establishes the stakes of my reading of La Coacha’s remix. As the summer of 2009 progressed, these unmarked contingencies of race and perspective were heard repeatedly across the country. Although Lady Gaga has explored her interest in the violence fame does upon the celebrity body, her fame is shown to be doing a kind of discursive violence on others, which goes largely unexamined in Gaga’s own analysis.

La Coacha consolidates this point in the line, “Did you know that HIV isn’t only in gay communities?” This gestures back to the same campaign in which Lady Gaga declared her celibacy. That interview was part of her work on MAC’s Viva Glam campaign about HIV-AIDS awareness. Although it was meant to be empowering and make the option of not having sex seem more viable, she was not ultimately inclusive in her message. La Coacha recognizes the activism that Gaga engages on behalf of LGBT women by making her comments inclusive of queer sexualities, but she also notes that Gaga remains notably silent on how HIV disproportionately affects people of color. Once again, Gaga prioritizes gender and sexuality above race.

ASSEMBLAGE & AFFECT: AMUSEMENT

The overwhelming majority of the cultural and textual forms within La Coacha's oeuvre suggest a humorous reading. She uses humor as a tool of critique, making her source texts into ridiculous spectacles in order to take away the seriousness surrounding them and take a second look. For public figures like the Kardashian sisters, who ostensibly take themselves seriously, this operates by questioning both them and pop culture more broadly. However, it is a particularly interesting move in relation to Lady Gaga, who already seeks to implicate the fame industry in her performances and with whom it is not clear how seriously she takes herself.

The case of "Alejandro," however, also highlights one way in which this methodological tactic of remix as revealing source text fails because one of the sources of affective structuring of "Alejandro" was created outside of the text. Though it can be read as a poppy summer dance hit, part of its affective qualities as a gay club anthem come from Gaga's dedication of it to her gay fans.

La Coacha latches on to the already spectacular figure and the culture surrounding Lady Gaga, setting up humor through three primary auditory modes, each of which is humorous in terms of content and the affective grain of how they are delivered. The first is through La Coacha's use of Chicano/a English, which is present throughout her work. She strings together a mix of individual Spanish words like *con*, *pero*, *nalgas*, *muchachas*, and Spanish phrases including "como dulce" and "ay, por favor," with English and Hispanicized English like the line, "Ron wanna kiss/Ron wanna tush/I yust wanna/Steek out my tush!" Here it is clear, that what is humorous is how she is saying the words, rather than the words, themselves. Second is La Coacha's use of sex. Not only does she use words like "whore" and speak of tasting sweet and

Madonna having a “loose” vagina, the irreverently delivers such cultural forms. Third is the sarcasm La Coacha uses to critique Hollywood partner swapping, MIA’s accusations of Gaga, and the overall tone of the entire video.

This tonal change from the original “Alejandro” pairs with the intersectional critique of race in order to encourage a sense of openness about Gaga. La Coacha’s audience laughs if they follow her encouragement to do so, even if they might be laughing at her acting out of racial stereotypes rather than with her recognition of those traits. In either case, listeners are placed in a receptive state such that when her clearest moments of critique, such as “Did you know that HIV isn’t only in gay communities?” take place, they are more likely to be well received. Rather than simply revealing the original text La Coacha sets up an affective misdirection which ultimately aids in her re-reading.

CONCLUSION: ENDURING INTERSECTIONALITY

In the conclusion of Puar’s *Terrorist Assemblages*, she outlines her proposed framework for rethinking the body and the self through the concept of the assemblage in order to blur the lines between people and better map the multiple flows of affect that circulate among us. This stands in contrast to earlier conceptions of subjectivity that consistently fall back on static conceptions of the body as isolated, coherent whole bearing the intersectional markers of identity including race, gender, and sexual orientation. In her update of this model, however, she hesitates in the area of intersectionality because of the history of activism around these markers and their continuing utility as indexes of meaningful difference within society. Because of this she seeks to partially maintain the vestiges of intersectional identity analysis, writing, “We

cannot leave it completely behind” (Puar 220). In her review of *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*, Liz Philipose describes Jasbir Puar’s book as a "crucial [analysis] of the deployment of race, gender, sexuality, and nation” (Philipose, 2009: 252). She continues, saying that Puar “unravels the assemblages of race, sexuality, nation, and gender” and explains how “‘assemblages’ captures the complex manifestations of sexualized racism, racialized nationalism, and gendered practices that simultaneously flow in a series of political moments...” (Philipose, 2009: 252-253). In this way, Philipose underscores the intersectional work being done in the book even as Puar makes a bid for a novel form of analysis that exceeds the possibilities represented by this more familiar tactic.

This combinatory strategy has laid the groundwork for my dual-pronged readings of “Lady Gaga ‘Alejandro’ music video featuring Ace of Base!” and *Spork! An Erotic Love Story*. La Coacha’s work makes particularly clear the necessity that we always mobilize both in her related play with coherence and non-coherence. As the conclusion to this chapter I will interrogate Puar’s statement, focusing on the term, “completely.” Why can we not leave it completely behind? I will ask why Puar maintains that intersectionality still need be a part of our critical tool box, examining how identity grids still happen and how minoritized subjects, like La Coacha, cannot but get caught in them.

Puar critiques intersectional identity analysis on the basis that it reinscribes the very logic it seeks to challenge. She cites Annamarie Jagose, who states that “sequence informs the very logic that drives desires for visibility” (Jagose, 2002: x). Visibility for the minoritized subject’s identity can never achieve its supposed goal of equality and, in fact, colludes with the system of domination the subject is caught in. They continue, together, “It is the regulatory and ‘self-

licensing logic of sexual sequence' itself that produces hierarchies of intelligibility for all sexualities and *thus* must be interrogated" (Puar, 2007: 213). It is for this reason that Puar questions subjecthood altogether, suggesting, instead, a school of thought based on the assemblage, a very different conception of the self and social.

However, even as Puar moves in a direction of increased mobility, Massumi's statement continues to haunt the project that "grids happen" (Massumi, 2002: 8). Grids happen even with refined critical tools. Massumi suggests that the grided understanding of selves as subjects, and intersectional subjects at that, emerge as a kind of simplified knowledge that is co-constitutive with the sensation-driven movement of the self as assemblage. Here, I discuss the enduring importance of intersectional analysis because of how these grids happen in two particular ways: in instances of racism and moments of connectivity.

This hybrid strategy exhorts that this intersectional critique be mounted beside, within, and through a reading that "underscores feeling, tactility, ontology, affect, and information," even as "naming, visibility, epistemology, representation, and meaning" (Puar, 2007: 215) cannot be entirely avoided. The example of "Lady GaGa 'Alejandro' music video featuring Ace of Base!" is useful because, like the body of Puar's female suicide bomber, La Coacha's Latina body and voice are always already bound up in questions of visibility. Will she be *seen*, *named* as a Latina, and made to *represent* Latinidad, effectively limiting the scope of her *meaning*? Will she be *seen* at all? And what of being *heard*?

Even as Puar exposes visibility politics as problematic visibility is always at play. This is what Puar foregrounds with her reading of the female suicide bomber. Regardless of tactics, the female suicide bomber's body is pre-marked. This is to say, even as the terrorist is an

assemblage, it is still male by default. Puar shifts the discourse around her activism to address how the act, itself, is gendered. Similarly for La Coacha, “sexuality is still announced in advance” (Puar, 2007: 220), necessitating that both intersection and assemblage come into play.

On the question of degree Puar is intentionally vague. When she states, “We cannot leave [intersectionality] completely behind” (Puar, 2007: 220), she implies that despite its failures, there is enduring utility for this mode of critique. By the term completely, she signifies that we cannot know when or how much one might use it productively. This ambiguity is intentional in that it underscores a central point about the contingency of assemblages. Part of Puar’s objection to extant identity politics of subjecthood is the way that retrospective ordering of affect has caused a misrecognition of the emerging present self as consistent, this arises from a tendency to project it largely unchanged into the personal past thus stabilizing assumptions about the uniformity of the future. She also takes to task the epistemology of subjecthood as figured through inadequate spatial metaphors – grids, places, sequence, individuality. For the thinking of assemblages, she looks to Deleuze for a more temporally contingent construction with time over space as the dominant narrative device, and the flexibility of constantly shifting senses of self and the social. In this same way, her proposed critical epistemology of ontology and affect need necessarily be deployed in delimited moments of emergence, such as the summer of circulation for “Alejandro” and “Lady GaGa 'Alejandro' music video featuring Ace of Base!”

Having established *why* we cannot jettison intersectionality, I turn my attention to *how* intersectional critique can be mounted beside, in, and through a reading that “underscores feeling, tactility, ontology, affect, and information,” even as “naming, visibility, epistemology, representation, and meaning” (Puar, 2007: 215) cannot be entirely avoided. The example of

“Lady GaGa 'Alejandro' music video featuring Ace of Base!” is useful because of the way she simultaneously plays with both sets of concepts. This is achieved in three ways. First, La Coacha increases the legibility of her Latinidad to excess, cultivating a humorous affect. Knowing that being Latina, herself, overdetermines her position vis-à-vis the critique of Lady Gaga and “Alejandro” she wishes to make, La Coacha does not disavow or underplay this linkage in attempts to claim an unmarked objectivity she will never achieve. Rather, she does the opposite, foregrounding her Latinidad in such a way that exceeds attempts to ghettoize her into this single space on the grid. Because no individual is quite the excessive Latina stereotype that she presents, she is able to simultaneously claim her intersectional position while also highlighting how she is more than that, and, indeed, not that at all at the same time.

Second, despite this play with her own body, La Coacha foregrounds Latinidad is not through the moving images of the video at all, but, rather, through sound. This verbal tactic is concretized by the humorous subtitles that visualize the audible difference, and speaks to the aforementioned identitarian excess. It also positions this work of audibility as something slightly askew from visibility politics, per se, with an emphasis on the words themselves and thus the message of her critique rather than the pre-scripted position of her body.

Having suggested in this thesis that sound and hearing provide and structure a similar point of view, it is easy to conclude that politics of visibility map easily onto politics of audibility. In this case, it is La Coacha’s perspective as a women of color that is in danger of being ignored, regardless of whether that perspective is launched in terms of a point of view or directed listening. However, because racism has historically been figured so predominantly in

terms of visibility and visual markers such as skin color, it is worth noting that La Coacha experiments with sound as a kind of back door into the political.

Finally, La Coacha assembles a cast of singers for her video that embodies the ambiguity both of Latinidad and identity, itself. Although the piece gives the clear impression of a strong Latina/Latino presence and the cast list suggest a multi-racial collective, it is not actually possible to tell which of the voices are Latino or Latina and which are “allies” in listening, this effectively questions this distinction altogether.

La Coacha’s queer coalition harkens to Puar’s closing words in *Terrorist Assemblages*, “What does this rereading and rearticulation do to Cohen’s already expansive notion of queer coalitional politics? What types of affiliative networks could be imagined and spawned if we embrace the already queer mechanics and assemblages...of terrorist bodies?” This articulates the other side of what I have suggested above. Where it is clear that grids continue to happen partially because of the ongoing histories of racism, they also happen, albeit inconsistently, in the structuring of affinities. By reformulating this question as what types of affiliative networks could be imagined and spawned if we embrace the already queer mechanics and assemblages of Latina bodies, I have attempted to elaborate on La Coacha’s attempt to think assemblage and intersection together. I wish to show how we need not leave behind the affiliations we already feel and hear, provided we attempt to feel them rather than only *looking* to the decidedly unqueer formulations that unambiguously declare an inside and outside based solely on the grounds of heteronormative blood status and visual mutual recognizability.

CONCLUSION: RELATIVES & INTERROGATIVES

Who is Lady Gaga? This uncertainty emerges as an animating question for my thesis. It was first posed in the introduction as I traced her singing of “Just Dance” into a remix DJ Earworm describing the 2009 American economic turnaround. Are unemployment and the economy among Gaga’s priorities? If so, we have heard very little indication, and certainly almost none in “Just Dance,” itself.

The question came again in the second chapter as La Coacha invoked Gaga’s music for critique and amusement. Coacha becomes Gaga and sings about sexuality, sexual health, celebrity, and the recent history of pop music, all topics that hold a privileged position in the *œuvres* of both La Coacha and Lady Gaga herself. Is it then fair to read them as being the same? Is La Coacha Lady Gaga? Is Gaga Coacha? And what of the twist with which Coacha-as-Gaga turns the performance back on herself?

As with Zachary Quinto, we are left at an impasse in terms of who Lady Gaga actually is. We are witness only to moments of her exploding self, unable to fully capture the movements, speeds, intensities, and directions of the process. One answer might involve a gesture to her pre-fame, pre-*Fame* name – Stefani Joanne Angelina Germanotta. Another might involve pinning her down to an identitarian grid of race, sexual orientation, and gender: a white bisexual woman? But far more important than any of these incomplete answers is the question, itself. The repeated asking of “Who?” encourages multiple attempts to trace these lines of flight, taking off and moving outward from the physical cells of a particular body as the figure of Gaga is represented, mixed, remixed, heard, consumed, and blown apart.

This conclusion starts with Gaga and, like her exploding persona, spirals out to explore other possibilities that are based in, but liftoff from, my central argument about formal directed listening. This outward expansion is followed by the corresponding return, coming back to what I have argued for a final look at its stakes, implications, and conclusions. First I unpack the question of who Lady Gaga is, moving beyond what I have argued about affect, intersectionality, and the remix to explore the process of the “mix” before the “re-” for commercial musicians. To that end, I discuss Gaga’s persona as an artist and the multiplicity of bodies involved in the public production of Gaga, including culture industry workers and individual listeners. Second, I return to DJ Earworm and “Blame it on the Pop.” Inverting my use of the remix as an optic for critiquing a source text, I explore the multiple vectors of appropriation involved in the 2009 episode of *United States of Pop*. My probing includes questions of trans-racial sampling and the use of international music for explorations of Americana. This is followed by an examination that flips the explosion of Gaga and Quinto, reading Earworm as an assemblage composed of the borrowed pieces of exploding stars. Finally, I revisit directed listening in order to explore its stakes, implications, and conclusions. What the implications are of directed listening for audio culture and Sterne’s core set of questions about sound studies? And finally, I ask what this thesis has shown in terms of the critical work of the remix and what this means for remix culture.

GAGA FOR GAGA

This thesis has relied centrally on the diverse cultural practices indexed by the term remix. Having traced the history of that word back to mid-20th century Jamaica, it is useful to take a closer look at the word itself. Up until this point, I have invested a great deal in the prefix,

“re-.” I have shown that the repetition indicated by this “again” can be mobilized as a powerful tool for examining the text being manipulated, versioned and redeployed. Having shown the contingencies of “Alejandro,” in particular, I now turn my attention to the process of mixing the original formulation of commercial cultural products. As a working definition of the mix, I propose to be broadly inclusive of the range of work that produces, for example, the music of Gaga. In what follows I examine her character persona and its uniquely clear but still generalizable non-coherence: the work of those surrounding her, putting together and distributing her brand, particularly those culture industry workers in the Haus of Gaga. The consumers that ultimately listen to her complete the process of creation in infinite tiny instances of construction and consumption. If, as Barthes suggests, “the body of the voice” (1977: 188) is continually invoked by vocal recordings, then the work of all these parties can be read as creating Gaga bodies, multiplying and blowing her apart even prior the processes of *remix*.

In “Going Gaga” (2011) Jack Halberstam offers a reading of Lady Gaga as emblematic of a new kind of feminism. This *shadow feminism*, as he terms it, responds to the failures of the feminist movement to bring about social change, divesting from the concept of authenticity altogether and seeing what can be salvaged from the ashes of total artifice. This tactic embodies the character concept for Gaga. Like David Bowie’s Ziggy Stardust, the figure of Gaga exists as a pseudonym, a persona, and an alter ego, creating the first cut in the possibility of subjective coherence before the first line of the first song was recorded. Bowie is famous for having performed concerts in character and weaving complex narratives around himself, eventually advancing to a point at which it became difficult to separate his selves. Similarly but

to an even greater extent, Halberstam notes that Gaga remains constantly in character, embracing the artifice and taking the performance to its natural extreme.

Her character persona is visible and much discussed in terms of the spectacle and material culture of Gaga's outrageous fashions. She is known for having worn clothes made of meat, for performing in an automated "living dress," for coming on stage only in plastic bubbles, and for being interviewed in an outfit made entirely Kermit the Frog dolls stitched together. Importantly, these displays are not restricted to award show red carpets, music videos, and concerts, but rather take place whenever Gaga enters public spaces. This notably giving her particular trouble in airport security check points.

It is important to show how the efforts of many goes into the creation of this character. Once again, the case of Gaga is particularly demonstrative because of the visibility of her creative team, known as the Haus of Gaga. The members of Haus are responsible for the creation of everything she wears as well as much of the set and props for her concerts and design elements for her music videos.

The viscosity of Gaga's clothes find an analogue in her vocal performance. The inconsistency of her vocal patterns in interviews calls attention to the cracks and fissures of the character even as in its omnipresence. She is sometimes attentive, speaking at an average speed with hints of Italian-American New York. At other times, however, her tone is lilting, as if she drifts in and out of an interview or conversation, consistent with the dreamy qualities of her production. Additionally, Halberstam points to two recordings that highlight her divestment from coherence. The first is in the song "Telephone," where the use of electronic vocal effects washes out conceptions of a singular authentic voice. More particularly, the stutter which

highlights the technologies of mediation and the stuttering of personal deployment of the self. She stutters, for example on the line, “I’m busy,” importantly a sentence taking the first person personal pronoun as the subject. The stuttering in a statement about the self then calls into question the statement and thus the self, itself. Is she busy? Or is it another body belonging to the second, deeper, and electronically warped voice (hers?) that repeats the line? The second recording Halberstam points to is Gaga’s avant-gardist collaboration with Yoko Ono at LA’s Orpheum Theater in October of 2010. As the two extemporaneously deploy Ono’s song, “The Sun is Down,” they literalize the undoing of subjectivity through a vocal performance in which they let go of all control and narrative coherence.

Once again, moving to the audio brings us most clearly into the realm of “mixing.” Music producer, Rob Fusari, for example, not only mixed many of the earliest songs for Gaga, assembling the tracks out of pieces of vocal recordings, melodies, and instrumentation, but also is credited as being involved in generating the name, Lady Gaga. Cultural workers like Fusari, then, as well as the countless musicians, agents, recording industry personal, and public relations teams are involved in the making of Gaga. Is Fusari Gaga? Are all of them?

Finally, this thesis has largely skirted moments of actual listening in favor of examinations of the bodies of audio texts. However, after Gaga has performed, and after formal mixing has taken place, the final moment of constructing Gaga takes place on iPods and stereos, on computers on youtube, in homes, at offices, and everywhere that Gaga is being consumed. Each consumer hears a unique set of audio texts related to Gaga, with relative numbers of listens and different levels of attention and interest paid to each, and each listener brings different pieces of themselves to the table, multiplying Gaga out exponentially. Some of those listeners will

remix her, clearly and palpably spinning out a new textual Gaga body into the universe to circulate on its own, but even for those who do not remix her media still produce anew her persona. Their engagement constitutes a moment of existence and a moment of explosion for any coherent answer to the question of who is Gaga.

Although Gaga provides a singular case of this, particularly in its clear audibility, in her known character acting, in the popular knowledge of the Haus of Gaga, and the sheer volume of consumers she has reached, such conceptions of stardom and subjectivity are also generalizable.

EARWORM AKA ROSEMAN AKA GAGA AKA WEST AKA SEAN

In terms of intersectional subjectivity, this begs the question who are all these people and where are they positioned on the identitarian map? In this thesis, we've explored Lady Gaga as a white bisexual woman, but what of the other bodies hidden by these processes of the culture industry? All of these questions therefore draw out not only Gaga's involvement but that of many others, and call into question at this cultural moment, by this particular revelation of directed listening, who is Lady Gaga?

Having posed these questions and sharpened these tools for critique, this thesis turns now, in its conclusion, to invert the critique made in most of its body and take on the piece that opened us up – Earworm's "United States of Pop 2009 (Blame it on the Pop)." The cases of La Coacha, and cirrocumulus and jiaren_shadow provided grassroots responses to culture industry products. These created points of entry through critique, which I read in terms of intersectionality and affect, using these polemic tools to examine the source texts. But it is equally important to calibrate these critical frameworks to examine the construction of remixes

themselves. Contemporary internet culture has shown us that remixes can be remixed and those remixes can be remixed further, taking and exceeding the popularity of the original text. Here, I will begin to trace two lines of flight from which serious critique could be done on “Blame it on the Pop.”

In terms of intersectionality, La Coacha provided a Chicana and Latina-authored response to the racialized gendered sexuality presented in “Alejandro,” redirecting consumer listening to specific content in the original. Relatedly, *jiaren_shadow* and *cirrocumulus* took a narrative in which the position of women were formally and substantially erased and created something new from that situation. Both of these are examples of minorities responding to dominant culture in the way Muñoz describes as disidentification. However, the case of Earworm is different. As a white male of unknown sexual identification, it is less clear how his own subjectivity can be read against his work leading to some important questions about appropriation.

Take for example, Earworm’s work with Kanye West’s music. West, himself, is known for heavily incorporating elements of remix culture into his commercial music. Four of his six singles that charted in the top ten in the United States contained elements of pre-existing music. “All Falls Down” (2004) interpolates elements of Lauryn Hill’s “Mystery of Iniquity” (never commercially recorded) including vocals re-recorded by Syleena Johnson; “Gold Digger” (2005) features Jaime Foxx covering Ray Charles’ “I Got a Woman” (1954); “Stronger” (2007) samples Daft Punk’s “Harder, Better, Faster, Stronger” (2001) in the chorus; and “Good Life” (2007) contains sampled keys from “P.Y.T. (Pretty Young Thing)” (1983) by Michael Jackson. However, the cultural valence of a Black artist like West borrowing from other Black artists including Hill, Charles, and Jackson, or even his borrowing from the white French duo, Daft

Punk, is not the same as Earworm borrowing from him. Earworm's particular vector of appropriation must be considered against the history of stolen Black music. Similarly deserving of further future interrogation is Earworm's transnational borrowing of music from figures such as Drake, a Canadian rapper and artist, or Jay Sean, who is British. There is a particular cultural valence to sublimating these pieces into an American narrative. Though it is beyond the scope of this thesis, I wish to suggest it as a point of future research and something to be held in mind as we look at intersectional analyses of recorded sound.

The complexity of the above situation only serves to highlight the multiple, differently inflected vectors of appropriation and remix that Earworm's piece involves. In terms of affect and assemblage, this makes legible the inverse of what I have shown through the breaking apart and dissolution of Zachary Quinto and Lady Gaga. Like those situations, Earworm is stretching and changing individuals, but, in doing so, is he assembling himself out of them. Rather than blowing himself apart, this operation is about building: taking exploded pieces and making a self.

Each episode of *United States of Pop* is assembled from twenty-five different songs, all of which placed highest on that year's *Billboard* Hot 100 chart. "Blame it on the Pop" involves nineteen main artists and groups with an additional seven featured artists (see Appendix A). Earworm takes lyrics from each of the twenty-five songs and incorporates music from seven. But these choices are intentional. When he places Gaga next to Hillson, he creates juxtapositions in order to communicate a piece of himself, creating new meaning in a new text. However, just as we see Earworm assembling himself out of these fragments, so too does Earworm's compilation explodes. As "Blame it on the Pop" is remixed again, being recast as percussion

covers, paired with slideshows of high school students, or made acoustic, Earworm himself is blown apart.²⁰

REASSEMBLING ARGUMENTS

My use of the remix in this thesis is partially rooted in the culture war taking place around whether remixes ought to be legal. However, I have tried not to let these debates structure my work. I read affinities between this and Linda Williams' early work on pornography which began at the height of the feminist sex wars of the 1980s and one of the many cyclical moments of anti-pornography panic from the right. At that time she wrote, "It is my hope that this study will be of intellectual and political use to those who have a need to get beyond the question of whether pornography should exist to a consideration of what pornography is and what it has offered those viewers who have been 'caught looking' at it" (Williams, 1989: xvii). So too have I sought to get past legal questions of whether the remix should exist. But in doing so I find myself in a position still to partially inform that debate. In looking at remix practices and remix texts in order to judge whether they are, in fact, plagiarism, one of the primary questions being asked about them are how they are new. For as I detailed in my introduction, all cultural production to a certain extent relies on what has come before it, so there is no bright line test, but this question remains central. However, if one is looking for new material in a remix like Spork, then certainly the answer is that there is none. However, my

²⁰ See examples: Accessed April 9, 2011, from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C1gGpxyjuUk> and <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PknoaYUyAmw>.

analysis has shown that by examining the ways that audio and affect have functioned together, that there may be something new there in terms of structures of feeling and sensation.

Launching from the remix, this thesis has examined the cultural and textual forms that direct our experience of listening. It addressed this consumption from both the bodily frameworks of intersectional subjectivity as well as affective assemblage. In moving between these, I argue for the enduring, mutually-reinforcing necessity of using both. The remix has suggested both a methodological lens for revealing directive audio forms as well as marking a particular historic shift in listening.

My use of the remix in this thesis is partially rooted in the culture war taking place around whether remixes ought to be legal. However, I have tried not to let these debates structure my work. I read affinities between this and Linda Williams' early work on pornography which began at the height of the feminist sex wars of the 1980s and one of the many cyclical moments of anti-pornography panic from the right. At that time she wrote, "It is my hope that this study will be of intellectual and political use to those who have a need to get beyond the question of whether pornography should exist to a consideration of what pornography is and what it has offered those viewers who have been 'caught looking' at it" (Williams, 1989: xvii). So too have I sought to get past legal questions of whether the remix should exist. In looking at remix practices and remix texts in order to judge whether they are, in fact, plagiarism, one of the primary questions being asked about them is how they are new. All cultural production to a certain extent relies on what has come before it, so there is no bright line test. Yet, this question remains central to current debates on the remix. However, my analysis

has shown that by examining the ways that audio and affect function together, we can uncover how remixes offer something new in terms of feeling and sensation.

In *The Audible Past*, Sterne introduces what he calls the audiovisual litany, a list of essential differences scholars have proposed to account for the singularity of hearing vis-à-vis seeing. It is worth repeating the list here:

- hearing is spherical, vision is directional;
- hearing immerses its subject, vision offers a perspective;
- sounds come to us, but vision travels to its object;
- hearing is concerned with interiors, vision is concerned with surfaces;
- hearing involves physical contact with the outside world, vision requires distance from it;
- hearing places us inside an event, seeing gives us a perspective on the event;
- hearing tends toward subjectivity, vision tends toward objectivity;
- hearing brings us into the living world, sight moves us toward atrophy and death;
- hearing is about affect, vision is about intellect;
- hearing is a primarily temporal sense, vision is a primarily spatial sense;
- hearing is a sense that immerses us in the world, vision is a sense that removes us from it. (Sterne 15)

I have primarily engaged the second, that vision offers a perspective, but hearing immerses its subject. I have attempted to show how directed listening offers a kind of perspective. However, I have also addressed the ninth, which is particularly relevant to the stakes of for remix culture more broadly.

In reference to the second item on the list, the concept of directed listening troubles the proposed distinction that the idea that “hearing immerses its subject,” but “vision offers a perspective” by proposing a kind of auditory perspective, or gaze. Although actual listeners consuming Lady Gaga’s “Alejandro” may experience multiple and mobile, fluctuating lines of identification, the audio of Gaga’s voice and music structures the text from a single perspective.

It is, of course, conceivable that individuals might mentally take up the position of the spurned “Latin lovers” – Fernando, Roberto, and Alejandro. In part, such an identification may have led to the “Lady GaGa 'Alejandro' music video featuring Ace of Base!” remix. Nevertheless, the vocal narration directs listeners to the white female perspective of an exploded Gaga in a manner similar to the subjective gaze of camera placement.

This breaking down of barriers assumed to exist between the sight and hearing also gestures toward the sensory experience of synaesthesia, or the linked and interchanging nature of the senses. Synaesthesia has been legible in this thesis each time the audio texts’ relationship to visuality is highlighted, be it the historical branding linking *Star Trek* on television; *Star Trek*, the 2009 feature film; and *Star Trek*, the Howard Dean Foster audio book, or the bracketing of the moving-images of La Coacha’s music video that accompanies her song. Even as I have focused on the audio, I have admitted that these texts exist in relation to visual media. Synaesthesia pops up again in Barthes’ suggestion that the grain of the voice always references a body, a body that might be experienced, consumed, or thought of through any of the senses.

This synaesthetic process opens up the possibility of cultural and historical shifts in the coding of individual senses. But all of this begs the question, then, why study listening? If listening is not as distinct from vision as previously proposed, if it slips into and interchanges with other senses, if it is simply a narrativization of a prior pro-prioceptive sensation,²¹ then what are the goals and the stakes of studying it? The answer is that historically- and culturally-

²¹ Synesthesia has linkages to the neural scientific concept of pro-prioception taken up by Massumi, Puar, and others. According to pro-prioception, sensation is experienced at a visceral open-endedly social level first and primarily, which is then coded and narrativized onto the senses secondarily.

contingent ways of coding individual senses continue to be salient in the mapping of relations between consumers, texts, and the culture industry. Proposed schemas of pro-prioception and synaesthesia do not wholly dislodge the lived, ontological reality of listening. And listening has historically suffered from undertheorization. The study of listening opens a field of untapped resources for what Puar calls the epistemology of ontology. Listening is not always distinct from seeing, and not all moments of listening are the same, but listening and audio texts provides new points of entry into the questions of assemblage, intersectional identities, media, and culture.

APPENDIX A: SONGS REMIXED IN "UNITED STATE OF POP 2009 (BLAME IT ON THE POP)"

The following songs are the source texts DJ Earworm incorporated into his remix, *United States of Pop* 2009, "Blame it on the Pop." Each of these songs was listed in the *Billboard* Hot 100's top twenty-five songs of 2009. Though many were released in 2008, their popularity led them to chart highly in 2009. Years listed below indicate when the track was released as a single or for radio airplay in the United States.

All-American Rejects, The. "Gives You Hell." 2008.

Beyoncé. "Halo." 2009.

Beyoncé. "Single Ladies (Put a Ring on It)." 2008.

Black Eyed Peas, The. "Boom Boom Pow." 2009.

Black Eyed Peas, The. "I Gotta Feeling." 2009.

Clarkson, Kelly. "My Life Would Suck Without You." 2009.

Cyrus, Miley. "The Climb." 2009.

Drake. "The Best I Ever Had." 2009.

Flo Rida. "Right Round." 2009.

Foxx, Jaime feat. T-Pain. "Blame It." 2009.

Fray, The. "You Found Me." 2008.

Hilson, Keri feat. Kanye West and Ne-Yo. "Knock You Down." 2009.

Kings of Leon. "Use Somebody." 2008.

Lady Gaga. "Poker Face." 2008.

Lady Gaga feat. Colby O'Donis. "Just Dance." 2008.

Mraz, Jason. "I'm Yours." 2008.

Perry, Katy. "Hot n Cold." 2008.

Pitbull. "I Know You Want Me (Calle Ocho)." 2009.

Sean, Jay feat. Lil' Wayne. "Down." 2009.

Soulja Boy Tell 'Em feat. Sammie. "Kiss Me Thru the Phone." 2008.

Swift, Taylor. "Love Story." 2008.

Swift, Taylor. "You Belong with Me." 2009.

T.I. feat. Justin Timberlake. "Dead and Gone." 2009.

T.I. feat. Rihanna. "Live Your Life." 2008.

West, Kanye. "Heartless." 2008.

APPENDIX B: SONGS REMIXED IN “ALEJANDRO”

The following songs are the source texts La Coacha incorporated into her remix, “Lady GaGa 'Alejandro' music video featuring Ace of Base!” Some are invoked in her lyrics or by name, while others are cited in sound only. Years listed below indicate when the track was released as a single or for radio airplay in the United States.

Ace of Base. “All That She Wants.” 1993.

Ace of Base. “Don’t Turn Around.” 1994.

Ace of Base. “I Saw the Sign.” 1994.

Lady Gaga. “Alejandro.” 2010.

Lady Gaga feat. Beyoncé. “Telephone.” 2010.

M.I.A. “Paper Planes.” 2008.

Madonna. “La Isla Bonita.” 1986.

Wreckx-N-Effect. “Rump Shaker.” 1992.

APPENDIX C: AUDIO TEXTS CITED IN THIS THESIS

The following audio texts are cited in this thesis. It also includes texts posted in video format that this thesis reads in terms of audio. For commercially released songs, the years listed below indicate when the track was released as a single or for radio airplay in the United States except for Yoko Ono's "The Sun is Down," which has only been released on an album. Lauryn Hill's "Mystery of Iniquity" is not included because it is primarily performed live and has not been recorded commercially. Howard Stern's remix of Dolly Parton's autobiographical audio book is not included because it is no longer in circulation due to legal concerns.

Abba. "Fernando." 1976. Song.

Backstreet Boys, The. "I Want It That Way" 1999. Song.

Lopez, Jennifer. "Waiting for Tonight." 1999. Song.

Ace of Base. "All That She Wants." 1993. Song.

Ace of Base. "Don't Turn Around." 1994. Song.

Ace of Base. "I Saw the Sign." 1994. Song.

Black Eyed Peas, The. "Boom Boom Pow." 2009. Song.

Black Eyed Peas, The. "I Gotta Feeling." 2009. Song.

Charles, Ray. "I Got a Woman." 1954. Song.

cirrocumulus and jiaren_shadow. *Spork! An Erotic Love Story*. 2010. Accessed April 9,

2011, at http://community.livejournal.com/ontd_startrek/1043908.html. Remix.

Daft Punk. "Harder, Better, Faster, Stronger." 2001. Song.

Drake. "The Best I Ever Had." 2009. Song.

DJ Earworm. "United State of Pop 2009 (Blame it on the Pop)." *United States of Pop* series. 2009. Accessed April 9, 2011, at <http://dyearworm.com/united-state-of-pop-2009-blame-it-on-the-pop.htm>. Remix.

Foster, Alan Dean. *Star Trek*. 2009. Audio book.

Hilson, Keri feat. Kanye West and Ne-Yo. "Knock You Down." 2009. Song.

Howard Stern Show, The. Howard 100 and Howard 101. 1975-present. Radio show.

"Howard Stern - 2008-02-28 - Bill Clinton Audio Book on Jennifer Flowers." *Howard Stern Show, The*. 2008. Accessed April 9, 2011, from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=apHyhI34fC0>. Remix.

Jackson, Michael. "P.Y.T. (Pretty Young Thing)." 1983. Song.

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Lady Gaga. "Alejandro." 2010. Song.

Lady Gaga. "Bad Romance." 2009. Song.

Lady Gaga. "LoveGame." 2009. Song.

Lady Gaga. "Paparazzi." 2009. Song.

Lady Gaga. "Poker Face." 2008. Song.

Lady Gaga. *The Fame*. 2008. Album.

Lady Gaga. *The Fame Monster*. 2009. EP.

Lady Gaga feat. Beyoncé. "Telephone." 2010. Song.

Lady Gaga feat. Colby O'Donis. "Just Dance." 2008. Song.

Lennon, John. "Imagine." 1971. Song.

Madonna. "La Isla Bonita." 1986. Song.

monopolypenguin. "Blame It On The Pop (2009) Cover - Blame It on the Poop." 2010.

Accessed April 9, 2011 at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PknoaYUyAmw>.

Ono, Yoko. "The Sun is Down." *Between My Head and the Sky*. 2009.

Open House Party. WRDW-FM. 1987-present. Radio show.

Parton, Dolly. *My Life and Other Unfinished Business*. 1994. Audio book.

Queen. "Radio Ga Ga." 1984. Song.

Sean, Jay feat. Lil' Wayne. "Down." 2009. Song.

Spaniard71. "DJ Earworm - United State of Pop 2009 - Mashup of Top 25 Billboard Hits

DRUM COVER." 2010. Accessed April 9, 2011 at

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C1gGpxyjuUk>.

T.I. feat. Rihanna. "Live Your Life." 2008. Song.

West, Kanye. "Stronger." 2006. Song.

West, Kanye feat. Jaime Foxx. "Gold Digger." 2005.

West, Kanye feat. Syleena Johnson. "All Falls Down." 2004. Song.

West, Kanye feat. T-Pain. "Good Life." 2007.

Wreckx-N-Effect. "Rump Shaker." 1992. Song.

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