

Aurality and the Tactics of Resistance in Spanish America (1539-1675)

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Abstract

In this article, I explore the role of sound within the urban context of colonial Spanish America. Through ethnographic, visual, and aural analysis of chronicles of the time, inquisitorial records, and paintings, I discuss how processes of appropriation of space, tactics of resistance, and denunciation of hegemonic practices played out in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spanish America. Drawing from sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology, and sound studies, I illustrate, on the one hand, how European colonizers introduced a soundscape whose increased intensity was aimed at regulating social life and establishing a political and religious authority among the local groups. On the other hand, I highlight how processes of sonorous mimesis and mimicry allowed the indigenous groups to escape the European subjugation without leaving. Ultimately, this article is a scholarly contribution to the current debate on methodologies to approach historical soundscapes without the support of empirical fieldwork to recover them in their entirety.

Auralità e tattiche di resistenza nell'America spagnola (1539-1675). In questo articolo indago il ruolo del suono all'interno del contesto urbano della colonizzazione spagnola dell'America. Attraverso un'analisi etnografica, visiva e aurale di cronache del tempo, documenti dell'inquisizione e dipinti, discuto come processi di appropriazione dello spazio, tattiche di resistenza e di denuncia di pratiche egemoniche hanno avuto luogo nelle colonie spagnole americane tra i secoli XVI e XVII. Attingendo dalla sociolinguistica, dall'antropologia linguistica e dai sound studies, illustro, da una parte, come l'introduzione di un paesaggio sonoro a più alta intensità da parte dei colonizzatori europei ha avuto lo scopo di regolare la vita sociale e stabilire un'autorità politica e religiosa tra le popolazioni locali. Dall'altra, metto in evidenza come processi di mimesi e mimetismo sonoro hanno permesso ai gruppi indigeni di sottrarsi alla soggiogazione europea pur senza fuggire. Infine, questo articolo costituisce un contributo all'attuale dibattito accademico inerente alle metodologie di approccio ai paesaggi sonori storici senza il supporto di una ricerca sul campo empirica che aiuti a ricostruirli nella loro interezza.

1. From creativity to mimicry and aesthetic disruption

It is late at night in Mexico City when a group of women and men are gathered inside a *tapacheria* on the city's outskirts. They are drinking *pulque*,¹ a cheap alcoholic drink made from fermented maguey, and dancing a fandango while nearby musicians play harps, guitars, and various idiophones. Not far away, local people, mainly of African origin, have decided to convene in a public square for a *jamaica*, a celebration that blurs the edges between the secular and the sacred. They erect altars with icons of Catholic saints, parody various liturgical practices and perform wild dances to the beat of constant music. Cathedral musicians take part in these public celebrations, which clergy members regularly host within their respective churches. It is the 1600s, the resounding city rejoices in itself, while the lettered city remains asleep.

In this essay, I explore the role of sound within the urban context of colonial Spanish America. Drawing from recent works on urban soundscape (Baker 2008; Baker and Knighton 2011; Knighton and Mazuela-Anguita 2018; Samuels *et al.*, 2010), I propose a sounded ethnographic methodology that illustrates how, through sound, the appropriation of space and the tactics of colonial resistance, identity display, and the denunciation of hegemonic practices played out in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spanish America. Given our chronological distance from the soundscapes of this period, the arguments presented herein contribute to methodological discussions of how to approach historical soundscapes without the support of empirical fieldwork.

The ephemeral character and volatility of sound, as well as the lack of pre-modern recording technologies, have confined the academic study of sound within certain borders, typically reflecting in church and palace walls and their respective archives. Still, it is important to recognize that decentralized places of lesser discernable power were also characterized by their active sound environments. Such an acknowledgment is essential to contextualizing their role in shaping policies and ideologies, and how peripheries, in turn, have been shaped by policies, ideologies, and practices of the dominant classes (Samuels *et al.*, 2010). Steven Feld's notion of *acoustemology*, that is, the «union of acoustics and epistemology [aimed at investigating] the primacy of sound as a modality of knowing and being in the world» (Feld 2003: 226), introduced a new sensibility in the social sciences: the reconstruction of cultural systems through an integrated approach in which anthropology, language, music, and acoustic ecology are combined together. It is to Feld's notion that the following pages' methods and lines of inquiry subscribe.

The examples I discuss here illustrate a broad sonorous spectrum that unfolded within and around Mexico City and the wider Andean area. I argue that indigenous communities and colonizers alike established various authorities on sound, which operated as a

¹ Alcohol consumption was a major concern for Europeans in the New World. The *pulque*, an alcoholic beverage popular among indigenous communities, was vigorously fought by the Spaniards, who considered it «the main cause of idolatry, thieving, murders, sacrilege, sodomy, incest, “and other greater abominations”» (Leonard 1929: 118).

lingua franca through which ethnic identities were accepted, rejected, and mediated. In the early modern context, I investigate decentered, non-Eurocentric practices of sound production through chronicles of the time, inquisitorial records,² and paintings.³ As for the latter, I propose an iconological analysis that, through an interpretative approach, examines such visual sources «as being constituted of signs of wider social formations or circulation of signs» (Balme 1997: 199). As Balme has pointed out, pictorial depictions of actors speak of the discursive practices of a time that circulate – mutuating a term coined by Stephen Greenblatt – as «social energy», which is a set of signs sedimented in all the types of textual production (*ibidem*: 193). I demonstrate how the sounds produced by indigenous groups in decentralized places fostered spaces of resistance that allowed them both to generate power and to domesticate Spanish occupation.⁴ Indeed, the Spaniards arrived upon New World shores by exhibiting their sonic power: bells were used to divide the indigenous groups' daily time, and trumpets and drums accompanied urban processions. These were dually responsible for establishing a spatial hierarchy within the city and for impressing the audience through a holographic transposition of Christianity within a sonic dimension. As we will see, the use of sound facilitated processes of Spanish settling in the New World. At the same time, disturbed by these new sets of conditions and rituals, indigenous groups within Mexico and the Aztec region devised sonorous strategies to counter the Europeans' invasive soundscapes. The first part of this essay summarizes the theoretical framework I adopt in addressing notions such as performance and creativity, and how these concepts connect with practices of resistance. In the second part, I argue that indigenous people in colonial Spanish America created spaces of sonorous and creative production that constitute a space of social action and semiotic transgression.

As we know from the work of sociolinguists and linguistic anthropologists (e.g., Bauman, Briggs 1990; Jakobson 1960; Turner 1982), the poetic function of language generates a space of performance in which to enact social critique. The various investigations of past scholars into the specific qualities of such spaces have established not only that human agency is indeed creative, but that creativity and “routine” coexist together.⁵ Unable to exist independently of one another, there is not a time for creativity and a time for routine. Creativity and routine cooperate together in generating a cognitive tool

² Unfortunately, none of the inquisitorial records I have been able to access so far refer to trials that mention musicians, dancers, singers, or other forms of entertainment. Since the inquisitorial trials have not yet been published, my analysis partially relies on the work of Javier Marín Lopez, who accessed the Archivo General de la Nación (AGN) in Mexico City, and who has located «more than a hundred inquisitorial trials related to music [...] to date» (Lopez 2011: 289).

³ The paintings I examine in this essay are discussed in Katzew 2011b.

⁴ For more detailed historical references about music in pre-conquest Mexico and how the European sonorous universe imposed itself during this period, see Robert Stevenson's *Music in Mexico, A Historical Survey* (1971 [1952]). Although attitudes toward ancient Mexican music changed after 1920, just before, in 1917, Aztec music was considered the expression of the «soul of a cruel and barbarous people [...] a degenerate expression, and therefore unsuited to the refined tastes of civilized Europeans» (Stevenson 1971 [1952]: 5).

⁵ In this paper, I use “routine” as opposed to “creative” (see Deumert 2018).

that allows us to understand «continuity and change, reproduction and transformation» (Deumert 2018: 10). Such a pairing liberates creativity from certain constrictions that had long relegated it, for example, to romantic notions such as inspiration, or to skills ostensibly possessed by a select few. Creativity emerges as a necessary, unavoidable, and daily practice suitable for understanding and domesticating everyday life.

As Richard Bauman and Charles Briggs have shown, performative discourse enacts a decontextualization and recontextualization of texts, which depend on the political and economic forces at play. Each text can be accessed by different authorities, who position themselves critically and raise issues of social power (Bauman and Briggs 1990). Performative-centered approaches have proven to be effective in investigating the different social lives of the world's cultures independently of their positions in time and space, and have likewise emphasized the indexical qualities of signs as opposed to their symbolic ones. Indeed, as we know from Charles Peirce's semiotic theory, a sign can be of three kinds: icon, symbol, or index. The icon imitates the object, in that it acts as a reproduction of it; the symbol signifies the object only because there is some norm that establishes their relationship; and the index denotes the object through connections that oppose any mere representation, either as in the case of the icon or in terms of a superimposed normative system, as in the case of the symbol (Pierce 1984: 56). The index introduces an expressive dimension, and it is a signifier that relies on the creative capital of those who generate or use it.

In contemporary sociolinguistics, indexicality has been used to interrogate questions of style, in which "style" is understood as a semiotic display of identity. In the influential work of Elinor Ochs (1990, 1992, 1993), for example, indexicality is key to processes of the construction of identity, as well as to interpretations of "social scenes and events" (Ochs and Schieffelin 2007: 7). Indexicality has been further considered capable of generating social transformations precisely because it escapes a predetermined and fixed relationship with the object (Baumann and Briggs 1990: 69). Within these critical traditions, my aim is to illustrate the aesthetic disruption that indexicality elicits, in which texts are reoriented, decentered, and reappropriated through metadiscursive processes, that is, discourses on other discourses, which involve «an active process of negotiation in which participants reflexively examine the discourse as it is emerging, embedding assessments of its structure and significance in the speech itself» (Bauman and Briggs 1990: 69).⁶ Through performance, participants enact metadiscursive practices, which in turn allow them both to criticize social power and reflect on their own positionality within social interactions.

In her work on the qualities of baroque within the context of colonial Latin America, Mabel Moraña uses the notions of hybridity, deformity, the transgression of limits,

⁶ According to the notion of soundscape developed by Raymond M. Schafer, people echo the sounds surrounding them in their linguistic structures and in the music they produce (see Schafer 1994 [1977]: 40).

and resistance to refer to the American Baroque as an «allegorical reproducibility of the struggles of power that are inherent in the process of insertion of the American world in the context of Occidentalism» (Moraña 2005a). Moraña focuses on the processes of recontextualization of the Andean baroque and the way it produced strategies to escape the modernity imposed by the Spaniards, recovering what she defines as «*the logic of baroque disruption*» (Moraña 2005a: 242, italics in original). Although Moraña's analysis is centered on visual production, her theoretical framework remains crucial for understanding how indigenous people displayed their identity through a hybrid artistic production that expressed both aesthetic and ideological stances. Moreover, she discusses the processes of mimesis and mimicry: mimesis is the ability to appropriate or embody another's identity,⁷ while mimicry constitutes instead the *locus* of difference or excess. In Lacanian terms, «the effect of mimicry is camouflage... it is not a question of harmonizing with the background, but against a mottled background, exactly like the technique of camouflage practiced in human warfare» (Lacan 1978: 99).

Mimesis and mimicry constitute the core of creative production. Mimicry has been simultaneously associated, on the one hand, with those who exercise authority over colonial discourse in the form of an «*ironic compromise*» (Bhabha 2004: 126, italics in original) between the demand for a static identity and the pressure for change, and, on the other hand, with those who resist a «narcissistic identification» (*ibidem*: 126) with colonial discourse by enacting practices of mockery that can escape the panopticon, while remaining aligned with and opposed to the original text.

Michel de Certeau's work on spatial practices demonstrates the role of creativity in deploying tactics of resistance. De Certeau provides us with interpretative tools for understanding the ways in which humans inhabit space and resist ruling powers. He points out that resistant behaviors are moved by *poiesis* (de Certeau 1988 [1984]: xii), which is to say, by creativity. The various and alternative ways in which individuals use «the products imposed by a dominant economic order» (*ibidem*: xiii) generate spaces of ambiguity, which are at once pervasive, silent, and invisible (*ibidem*). It is emblematic that, as an example of how individuals enact these strategies, de Certeau mentions the ways in which the indigenous groups resisted the Spaniards' colonization in the New World by subverting it from within and preventing a full superimposition of Western culture:

Submissive, and even consenting to their subjection, the Indians nevertheless often *made of [sic]* the rituals, representations, and laws imposed on them something quite different from what their conquerors had in mind: they subverted them not by rejecting or altering them, but by using them with respect to ends and references foreign to the system they had no choice but to accept. They were *other [sic]* within the very colonization that outwardly assimilated them; their use of the dominant social order deflected its power; [...] they escaped it without leaving. (*ibidem*: xiii)

⁷ Elsewhere in her scholarship, Moraña refers to mimesis as the moment of “cultural anti-imperialism” (Moraña 2005b) since it enacts an appropriation of the dominant identity.

Here, de Certeau is describing a process of appropriation that relies on a recontextualization of Western rituals, and thus of Western symbols. The fixity of the Spaniards' symbols shifts toward indexical expression. Rituals, representations, and even laws are recontextualized through mimicry and repurposed for new scopes: existing as an other within a dominant system and designing ways out without making too much noise are the objectives pursued by those who enact processes of mimicry.

De Certeau's analysis is performance-centered and reveals its semiotic implications since it highlights the "linguistic modality" of the processes of recontextualization and appropriation (*ibidem*: 98). According to de Certeau, these are strategies that follow linguistic rules. The most notorious example he provides is the elevation of the practices of the appropriation and domestication of space to the level of a speech act from which the enunciative function of the act of walking derives (*ibidem*: 98). Such a theoretical model becomes essential to unite the threads put forth thus far. Creativity, mimicry, indexicality, decontextualization, recontextualization, and the repurposing of identity operate according to internal relationships that generate disruption and resistant actions.

2. The resounding city: living in a synchronic time

De Certeau's theory is, in general terms, a "silent" one. He does not address, for example, the rhetoric embedded in the urban palimpsest or the public architecture in its aural dimension (see Sterne 2003), nor does he investigate the sonorous implications of the practices he describes. From this, a number of questions arise: what was the role of sound in enacting processes of mimicry in colonial Spanish America? What kind of performances did it foster? And how did sound facilitate the indigenous strategy of "escaping without leaving"?

The arrival of European colonizers in the Americas inaugurated new strategies for conceptualizing and constructing cities: «the lands of the new continent afforded a propitious place for the dream of the "ordered city" to become a reality» (Rama 1996: 1). Starting from the sixteenth century, Spaniards envisioned networks of cities organized according to precise patterns of repetition and order. Urban administrative, legal, religious, and economic systems were meant to conform to these hyper-rationalized cosmologies, which deeply impacted inhabitants' lives (*ibidem*: 1). Various utopias served as models for the cities that the Spaniards implemented in the New World, inaugurating a new urban era with the aim of rebalancing the many political and religious distortions of the time (de Quiroga 1992; Rama 1996). A combined alliance between religious and political power allowed these cities to materialize and be regulated by European and indigenous elites. Angel Rama points out that the written word was the most prominent means through which elites maintained and imposed their power over the locals. Regulations, edicts, decrees, and bans established a hierarchical society that reflected in urban space's equally hierarchical design and organization (Rama 1996: 3). Rama explains how the written

word emerged as a means of subjugation suitable for generating a panopticon. The influence of Christian hermeneutics, which enacts systems of power and social control, whose restrictions result in a renunciation of the self (Martín-Barbero 1993; Foucault 1988), deeply informed European settlements in the New World, as indeed it did in Europe.

How did indigenous groups gain access to the Europeans' written word? And, vice-versa, how were the Europeans able to transmit their written word among their conquered subjects? Illiteracy and the use of a different language were certainly obstacles to overcome. Geoffrey Baker has shown that «the written messages of the lettered city were often communicated orally, preceded or accompanied by music» (Baker 2011: 9). The written codes had, therefore, an auditive dimension. It was in this form that they were delivered to the indigenous population. This process of mediation added an expressive dimension to the inexpressiveness of the symbol. Indexicality emerged once the Spaniards needed to transmit their codes through oral transmission as those who enacted these performances, the criers, had to rely on their performative skills to be understood as effective communicators. The music these criers added *ex nihilo* played an important role in emphasizing their actions.

Music and sound constituted an effective communication channel through which to evangelize infidels and generate fascination with the Catholic Church, as well as to establish the Spanish authority in their new cities across the Atlantic (Baker 2008; Baker and Knighton 2011; Lopez 2011). Sonorous performances, such as religious processions, ceremonies celebrating the city's foundation, and military parades were adopted to enshrine the city's existence (Ricard 1966). Their implementation was key both to the pursuit of the cultural construction of the colonial cities and to the imposition of a fixed social order, such as the use of grids. With their extensive application of music and sound, processions and parades provided the contours for the city even before its architecture had been completed, thus «epitomizing the notion of city as performance» (Baker 2011: 6). The New World city required such performative actions to “activate” the city itself, the rhetoric on which it had been raised, and the symbolic horizon it would long underpin.

By introducing the notion of “resounding cities,” which echoes Rama's “lettered cities,” Baker explains how the use of music and sound, in general, served to reinforce the conservative condition depicted by Rama (Baker 2011). According to Baker, the musical repertoire in the cities of the New World was derivative and deliberately rooted in a fixed European tradition. The absence of any sophistication has to be interpreted not as a sign of backwardness, but as a symptom of power to freeze the *status quo*. Even the attempts at developing indigenous performative practices such as the vernacular-based *villancico* were aimed at mocking the «deficient use of language [...] such as that spoken by African slaves, or Peninsular regional variants, such as Basque or Portuguese», while consolidating «the power of those who wrote and spoke the hegemonic version of Spanish» (*ibidem*: 10). Baker's resounding city is a sounded version of Rama's lettered city, where the Spaniards enacted processes of sonorous mimesis that unfolded through

self-mimesis. What looks like a paradox is made possible by the new geography, which rendered the European identity as “other” to those same Europeans that traveled to the New World. The performative aspect of the colonial city, other than seeking to impress the locals with the barreling sound of trumpets, drums, and bells, allowed Europeans to recognize themselves sonically within this new space.

According to de Certeau, the «city founded by utopian and urbanistic discourse» is characterized by: the rationalization of space obtained by removing any sort of interference; the introduction, and imposition, of a synchronic system – which de Certeau defines as «nowhen» (de Certeau 1988 [1984]: 94); and the recognition of the city itself as a «*universal and autonomous subject*» (*ibidem*: 10, italics in original), which provides the initial conditions for understanding and building the space. The sense of censorship contained in de Certeau’s enunciation emerges with more clarity when he mentions the suppression of diachronic time in favor of a city’s internal time that rejects previous time markers that had been locally established. The goal of the imposed synchronic time is to contain the «indeterminable and stubborn resistances offered by traditions»⁸ (*ibidem*: 10). Among the several modalities the Spaniards used to superimpose this synchronic time, music was the most effective, both for the internal rational qualities of the Western musical tradition and for the way in which music was understood among the Jesuits, who combined Pythagorean with Platonic traditions. Musical proportions were used to build churches and institutional buildings in the *reducciones*. The imposition of a regulated *tactus* and *tempus* imposed a regulation over the non-metric rhythms of indigenous life. The way sonorous processions, military parades, and public celebrations performed the *reducciones*’ urban design established a spatial hierarchy between center and periphery (Lopez 2011: 203).

3. Processes of mimicry of and resistance to the colonial power

In his *El primer nueva corónica y buen gobierno*, the seventeenth-century chronicler Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala discusses the activity of musicians in colonial Perú. In a chapter titled “Maestro de coro y de escuela de este reyno”, he explains that the choirmaster was in charge of training young indigenous people «a leer y [e]scriuir para que sean cristianas asy que tenganojo y ánima para el cielo» (Guaman Poma de Ayala *ms.* 1615: 681, ed. mod. Murra and Adorno 1980). In the illustration that appears in the chapter titled *El capitulo del los padred de la doctrina*, Guaman Poma de Ayala depicts the choirmaster on the right side of the page, in fine clothes as he whips one of his students, who is being taken away by an assistant. The other children are sitting on the floor and writing what the choirmaster dictates to them, while a musical stand with sheet music on it stands to

⁸ The imposition of a synchronic time may be seen as equivalent to the imposition of a static identity discussed earlier.



FIGURE 1. *Los maestros de coro y de escuela deste rreyno tributario*. Xilographia from Poma de Ayala ms. 1615 (reproduced by permission from Murra and Adorno 1980, vol. 2: 634).

the left side of the drawing (Fig. 1). The illustration and the description that follows it reveal that musicians were central to the process of urbanizing the New World. European musicians instructed indigenous communities not only to be good performers of European church music themselves (Leaver 2015; Stevenson 1971), but also to be good citizens of the lettered city, to be faithful both during their time on earth and in the Christian afterlife. If the colonial city constituted the realm of performance, in which «musicians were among those principally responsible for bringing the ideal of the city into being» (Baker 2011: 9), the choirmasters were those who trained new generations to navigate the city's performative life and to be protagonists of the New World's musical practices.

The processions of the Inquisition generated a space – real, musical, and imagined – in which the performative vocation of the colonial city emerged at its clearest. These were demonstrations of power in which a palpable connection between religion and politics emerged. Among the most important celebrations promoted by the Inquisition were the

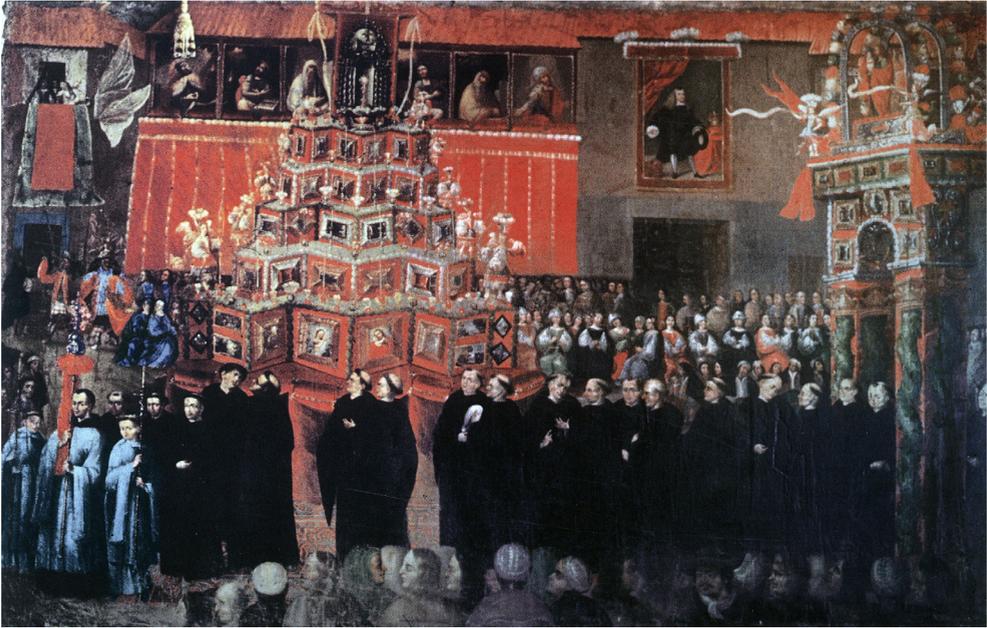


FIGURE 2. *Augustinian Friars* (from the series of *Corpus Christi*). Oil on canvas (220×260 cm); Cuzco school, c.1675-80; Larrian Cruzta's Family Collection (reproduced by permission from Dean 2011: 146).

celebrations of the patron saints, the Corpus Christi, and the *auto de fe* that publicly condemned heretics and opponents of Christianity. These performances strongly contributed to building the colonial soundscape, as some paintings from the time reveal. Through a close examination of some of these sources, it is possible to detect processes of mimicry of and resistance to colonial power.

An anonymous painting from the Corpus Christi series, completed around 1675, features Augustinian friars celebrating the processional triumph of Christianity as it moves through a triumphal arch (Fig. 2). The procession is flanked by crowds on either side, with the elite observers peering down from balconies depicted above. The festive order is disrupted by three subjects on the left, two dancers and a musician. By their dress and the color of their skin, once can discern that these are indigenous figures. The dancers wear European masks similar to those used in Carnival celebrations, while the musician, who is simultaneously playing a drum and a flute, is wearing a colonial helmet. They are performing something that is clearly foreign to the ongoing celebration. Although the masks and the helmet are indicative of a European identity, this identity is openly rejected by the figures' Andean costumes. As has been argued by Carolyne Dean, «we see members of the colonized population creating a composite identity in which they are, simultaneously, the same *and* different, Christian *and* Andean, compliant and subversive» (Dean 2011: 147, italics in original). What the indigenous figures are performing is likely



FIGURE 3. *Dance of Montezuma*. Color print (29,2×61,6 cm) from de Basarás ms. 1763 (reproduced by permission from Katzew 2006: 169).

a *taqui*, a theatrical form in which songs and dance are combined in order to perform militaristic themes (*ibidem*: 137).

The same hybridity involving sound and dance is shown in similar paintings in which it emerges in various forms. For example, a 1763 painting titled “Dance of Montezuma” (Fig. 3) and contained within Joaquin Antonio de Basarás’s *Origen, costumbres y estado presente de mexicanas y filipinas* (ed. mod. Katzew 2006), depicts the reenactment of the Montezuma dance. Two rows of musicians, situated on the left and right sides of the painting, face one another while other indigenous people dressed in traditional clothing dance between them. The musicians situated on the right side are playing musical instruments from the Western tradition – a guitar, a harp, and a violin – while those on the left side play indigenous instruments, such as the «teponatzly, ayacachtli, seashells, and flutes made of deer bones» (Katzew 2011b: 168).

The ritual form of reenactment triggers a process of self-mimicry, which establishes «a semantic distance that lessened the danger of a dormant, potentially threatened past» (*ibidem*: 169). Through their reenactment, the indigenous groups enact a metadiscursive practice, a discourse on a mythic past reframed and repurposed within a new colonial context. The traditional dance operates as an «expressive contact zone» (McDowell 2010), in which the artistic performance simultaneously creates links to and gaps with an identity that cannot be disclosed in its entirety. Yet because of this process of decontextualization and recontextualization, it is able to survive the new conditions that would have otherwise suffocated it.

4. Sonorous contact zones

A notable variety of indigenous performances were initially incorporated into Christian celebrations. Out of fear that they would eventually prevail over Christian-specific rit-

uals, however, these performers were banned only a few years later by cautious religious authorities. What happened in Mexico City, for example, is emblematic in this sense. In 1539, the city's first bishop, Juan de Zumarraga, not only banned indigenous dances from Corpus Christi, but also circulated «the translation from Latin of a widely read book by Dennis the Carthusian (1402-1472) on the correct way to celebrate religious processions» (Katzew 2011b: 158).

Indigenous music and dance were not performed only within the Christian contexts of processions or urban celebrations, in which local communities needed to adapt to some use of disguise. The inquisitorial records paradoxically give voice to those sonorous practices that the Inquisition wanted to repress. There are numerous edicts and decrees that prohibited dances and songs, in addition to denunciations of, and trials against, the activity of musicians, that have allowed us to gain a better understanding of how sound reverberated at the edges of the city.

The *tepacherías* were peripheral places where indigenous groups would gather until late into the night to play music, dance, and drink alcohol. A series of inquisitorial decrees sought to regulate these activities. The decree of 1671, for example, forbade the use of “harps, guitar or other instruments, dances and musicians” in these kind of places (Lopez 2011: 30). This regulation pushed local communities to arrange private festivities, in houses or squares beyond the city center. Here they could mock Christian celebrations by setting up altars and icons of saints, and by performing popular and energetic dances such as the *jamaica*. As witnessed in a 1691 inquisitorial trial, even the viceroy Juan de Galde attended these events (AGN, Mexico, *Inquisicion*, vol. 526, exp. 24, fols.122r-133r, 3 August 1796 in Lopez 2011: 50), and «even the clergy danced the *pan de jarabe*» in a fiesta arranged inside a convent in Mexico City (AGN, Mexico, *Inquisicion*, vol. 1362, exp. 14, fols.122r-133r, 3 August 1796, in Lopez 2011: 51, italics in original). Toward the end of the colonial period, almost all indigenous dances had been banned and some of their names could not even be spoken. The *chuchumbé*, for example, was labeled «the most scandalous, obscene and offensive to pure ears, accompanied by indecent and erotic movements, displays and provocative wiggling» (AGN, Mexico, *Inquisicion*, vol. 1075, exp. 14, fols. 280r-368r, 31 October 1766, in Lopez 2011: 52). The fact that among the long list of forbidden dances there are those that are still performed in present-day Latin America, as well as elsewhere in the world, such as the *fandango*, *corrido*, and *jarabes*, attests to the limited reach their prohibitions had. To be sure, these prohibitions and bans did not prevent traditional dances from re-emerging somewhere else in time and space perhaps as “invented traditions” within new performative places (Hobsbawm and Ranger 2000 [1983]).⁹

Nevertheless, the sonic relationships between these two aural spaces, indigenous and Spanish, were not always so diplomatic. In one of his letters to Admiral Pez, Don Carlos

⁹ As Alex E. Chavez suggested in the case of *fandango*, the re-enactment of historical practices can be seen as a “type of empowered innovation” enacted by non-hegemonic groups seeking to establish «a sense of contiguity» with expressive cultural resources of the past (Chavéz 2015: 552).

de Sigüenza y Góngora recalls the violent rebellion in Mexico City toward the end of the seventeenth century, in which indigenous subjects, *mestizos*, and Africans joined together against the Spaniards following the short supply of corn. The rebels set everything in their path on fire, including municipal buildings, shops, and palaces, and moved toward the main square armed with *machetes*, axes, and bars. In the middle of a riot, with half the city on fire among the screams of the rioters, the bells of the church rang a call to prayer instead of a call to arms. Jesuit and Mercedarian fathers began to stage a procession and approach the main square, chanting «litanies with soft music». They were confident that «their exhortations might be of some service in quieting the people» (Leonard 1929: 264). Of course, the stratagem did not succeed and «as the stones kept raining down upon them from everywhere at the same time, the religious order in which they were marching broken up, and all were scattered about in different places» (*ibidem*).

This episode is emblematic of how the Christian sonic universe could be used for surveillance purposes or, better, of how it could be misused for political ones. Litanies could serve as deceptive tools, while the bells, which were undoubtedly the loudest sound that one could hear at that time, could be transformed into an instrument of repression, whose function oscillated between religious and political.

Conclusion

From what emerges from the sources examined so far, I argue that the sounds used by the Spaniards in colonial Mexico operated mainly as signals, that is sounds that «must be listened to because they constitute acoustic warning devices» (Schafer 1994 [1977]: 10). By generalizing, it is fair to say that, on the one hand, the Europeans introduced a certain loudness within the New World soundscape, establishing the shift from village to city, as well as the centripetal quality of their sonic identity, which mainly revolved around the central square and mission bell. This constituted a soundscape aimed at regulating social life and establishing a political and religious authority. The increased intensity of the soundscape imposed by the Spaniards operated according to what Schafer labels the «subjugation by Noise [*sic*]» (*ibidem*: 77), a sound imperialism in which their political activity reverberated. On the other hand, the various strategies enacted by the indigenous groups allowed them to preserve their own soundmarks by refashioning their sonic identity without ever losing it.

The highly seductive power of some of the musical and dance activities performed by the local groups generated sonorous contact zones between these two acoustic poles: members of both the political elite and the clergy were, as illustrated earlier, attracted to and took part in such festivities, while at the same time indigenous musicians, who were already highly skilled in their own traditional music (Stevenson 1971), were employed in the religious processions and served in the Christian churches as singers or musicians, or as assistants to the choirmaster.

The aural space of colonial Mexico emerges as a critical factor to studying the social relationships between indigenous groups and Europeans. Furthermore, it allows us to investigate processes of reflexivity in colonial Spanish America. Indeed, if the Spaniards' soundscape enacted strategies of self-mimesis, the indigenous communities enacted a slightly different tactic based on self-mimicry. Sonorous creativity is consistent with de Certeau's model since it ensured the survival of both groups. Spaniards developed a sonic identity that served a double function. Firstly, it aimed at establishing a religious and political power over the locals through forging an extensive use of loud sounds and noises paired with performative actions of appropriation of space, such as parades, triumphs, *auto de fe*, etc. Secondly, the soundscape that the Europeans established in the New World facilitated processes of house-making and settling within their newly acquired territory. Conversely, indigenous people enacted tactics of resistance based on a reorientation of their sonic identity that allowed the Europeans to absorb them while still keeping alive their own sonorous identity.

The arrival of Europeans in the New World contributed to a sort of acoustic turn. The indigenous communities were trained in Western music, which they started studying together with the choirmasters, and taught to react to the signal sounds institutionally performed throughout the day. But perhaps the most relevant transformation was that indigenous groups became a listening community, following the seventeenth-century notion that an «audience should, and did, fall silent during a musical performance» (Carter 2018: 33). The way the Europeans understood sound facilitated the imposition of discipline on the indigenous groups of Spanish America, who «assimilated and excelled in European church music» including polyphony (Leaver 2015: 65). For their part, indigenous subjects resisted the European modernist project by enacting processes of mimicry and linguistic performances characterized by metadiscursive practices, which repositioned their identity within new contexts and allowed them to escape the repression and the grid of discipline imposed by the Spaniards.

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