

MUSICKING IN THE BORDERS TOWARD DECOLONIZING METHODOLOGIES

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Abstract

This essay engages a decolonial border methodology to unveil dichotomies of theory/practice, and scholarship/education as contested spaces of multiplicity, dominated by a coloniality of power. Musicking's profound connections to embodied experience make it a locality ripe for decolonial activity. Furthermore, I argue that Christopher Small's insights when critically reevaluated with decolonial thought, Deleuzian ontology, and border thinking with and from subaltern epistemologies, emerges as a productive site of struggle. This methodology hopes to create a malleable framework for other decolonizing methodologies to engage with rather than provide a blueprint for application. Decolonization as a musicking methodology can facilitate emergent ideas through equitable dialogue while simultaneously creating real spaces for more democratic and equitable musicking relationships. I argue here that decolonial music education, broadly conceived as occurring both inside and outside of academic institutions, carries profound implications not only for decolonizing music as such, but for larger decolonial struggles. It is in the borders of our musicking communities that the educators become the educated and the oppressed wage their own struggle for liberation with solidary musickers at their side.

Keywords: musicking; decolonization; borders; embodiment; critical pedagogy

INTRODUCTION

“Decolonization never takes place unnoticed, for it influences individuals and modifies them fundamentally.”¹ On February 16, 2016, when Pierpaolo Polzonetti published the article “Don Giovanni Goes to Prison: Teaching Opera Behind Bars” on MusicologyNow.org, the official web presence of the American Musicological Society, he reignited old debates and unintentionally generated quite a noticeable event.² The musicology community veritably exploded. Some camps identified the ways Polzonetti’s article perpetuated white savior narratives, paternalism, and normalization of a racist prison industrial complex, while other contingents chastised these scholars as overly sensitive “social justice warriors” or expressed confusion and dismay over why a well-intentioned article had attracted such criticism.³ Scholars critical of Eurocentrism in musicology instantly recognized a familiar narrative, in which Western classical music served as a part of a civilizing mission aimed at “listeners accustomed to the blatant lyrics and pounding beat of rap music.”⁴ These are old tropes that musicology and music education, after years of discussion, seem no closer to addressing adequately. The central problems for anyone interested in music, in the words of Christopher Small, are still how and why “music becomes equated with ‘works of the music in the Western tradition,’” and what should be done about it.⁵ I argue here that decolonial music education, broadly conceived as occurring both inside and outside of academic institutions, carries profound implications not only for decolonizing music as such, but for larger decolonial struggles.

In this essay, I will use Chela Sandoval’s *Methodology of the Oppressed* to read Small as a decolonial author, analyzing his implicit critique of coloniality in Western classical music.⁶ We will see then how the Eurocentric episteme is redeployed and musicking’s revolutionary potential is cut short. Next, I will analyze how Deleuzian ontology, when applied to Small’s musicking, takes us further in critique, but perhaps ensnares us even deeper within the cyclical traps of the Eurocentric episteme. Finally, I deploy Sandoval’s methodology, particularly the final three steps of “meta- ideologizing, democratics, and differential movement” in order to provide a theory of how decolonizing music is both underway and can be aided by decolonizing both our minds and our bodies by musicking together. This move occurs in the text through a discussion of the decolonial scholarship and musicking of activist/scholar/educator/performer Marco Antonio Cervantes.⁷

Franz Fanon’s remark from *The Wretched of the Earth*, which begins this essay, is a cogent reminder that decolonization, much more than a formal political struggle, is a profoundly transformative *process* that individuals undergo. Further, Fanon’s commentary navigates decolonization’s tumultuous disordering and transformation as it moves between inner, epistemic spaces and outer, material

spaces.⁸ In one sense then, a decolonization of music entails a decolonization of the mind.⁹ Decolonizing the mind is an epistemic question, which means that it is not a question of “what we are thinking,” but rather, “how we are thinking.”¹⁰

Epistemic decolonization, as a framework for understanding a decolonization of music, invites us to ponder the making of the musical worlds we inhabit and how we understand them. If we are serious about decolonizing music in any meaningful way, we must not only acknowledge, but also confront, the wider context in which musicology and music education, as fields of study, exist. Musicology is not an autonomous and equitable structure, which made missteps in its examination of different ways of making music. Rather, it exists within a larger Eurocentric modernity, a modernity that authors such as Anibal Quijano have demonstrated to be hopelessly entangled with economic, political, and epistemic sources of power established through European colonial violence.¹¹ We live in a world still shaped by racist and colonial structures, which historically constrain and condition us. These historical structures are as insidious as slavery and white supremacy (after all, why was early African American music not considered legitimate at the time?) and as seemingly innocuous as the catalog of conservatory degrees (why can't I major in sitar?). Importantly, these oppressions entail a complex symbiotic relationship between thought structures that reproduce and normalize material structures. These structures are deeply encoded into every aspect of our realities; addressing their insidious presence will entail an ongoing process without closure. But, because these structures (re)produce material and epistemic power, the question of decolonization, whether it is reached through deconstruction, ethics, or experience, is a political question. Herein lies the limit of epistemic critique deployed without profound struggle against ongoing material oppression: contemporary hegemonic forms of Eurocentric subjectivity have no imperative toward decolonization.

This essay attempts to provide a malleable framework in which decolonial musicking represents greater fulfillment for all musickers in new collective relations. Such musicking potential however, would entail a radical upheaval regarding epistemic and material power from within the academy and from without. In this sense, the debate surrounding Polzonetti's article is particularly fascinating for its treatment of power dynamics and relations between musicology, music education, and the wider reality in which both exist. To elaborate, William Cheng observes, “our conversation here has been as much about prisons—their cultural stigma, institutional violences, structural prejudices, symbolic thresholds—as about freedom.”¹² This observation is absolutely vital for problematizing the relationship between the field of musicology, its role in education, and the global context in which it exists. Decolonizing musicology entails a subversion of structural violence from within and without. In this sense, a decolonial methodology

navigates between new educations for those with authorized knowledge and empowerment for those whose knowledge is actively delegitimized, by way of new forms of musicking collectives.

While the explosive debate on MusicologyNow.org could be dismissed as a social media kerfuffle, a more productive perspective categorizes it as a political event, a boiling-over of complex, multiplicitous trajectories in a moment of coalescence. Alain Badiou describes the site of a political event as follows: “A site is a vanishing term: it appears only in order to disappear. The problem is to register its consequences in appearing.”¹³ Here, an excavation the event’s consequences provide productive ways toward preparing actions for future decolonizing activity.¹⁴ To begin, the cyberspace locality of this event arguably facilitated more honest and visceral manifestations of frustration on both sides, even though the balance of power offered more security to those defending the article as opposed to those critiquing it, with many of the latter expressing their views anonymously for fear of professional consequences.¹⁵ At a deeper level, however, it revealed the absolute chasm between different perspectives in thought. Those critiquing the article analyzed subjective and epistemic biases in order to draw connections with material violence. Because epistemic biases are deeply encoded and apparently natural ways of thinking and because exposing such ways of thinking as subjective and historically constituted would entail a violent disavowal of the power embedded within them, the nuances of critique were lost in the fray. The debate not only lacked a coherent focal point, it lacked the very terms of signification needed to engage in dialogue across subjectivities.

Such an event offers critical insight into the question of music education because the debate lays bare the deep contradictions between legitimized knowledge production and its role in education initiatives, whether in prisons, schools, or communities. It reveals the deep, unresolved, and false dichotomy between theory and practice, which in turn, points to other troubling questions lurking in the shadows of our colonized minds and societies: who has the authority to speak, think, and act? Which voices are actively silenced? How do we change this equation of power at a structural level? For scholars to achieve the privilege of authority and tenure and then use it to critique colonial discourses, (relatively) safe behind their desks, *alone* cannot address the structural realities of the violence. Decolonization cannot entail evermore politically correct narratives of violence, administered by evermore-benevolent authors. Decolonization seeks a radical disordering of violent structures in all of their insidious manifestations.¹⁶

I will use Chela Sandoval’s *Methodology of the Oppressed* and broader insights from decolonial studies as a framework for decolonizing musicking

methodologies.¹⁷ This approach highlights the paramount importance of navigating materiality in the form of political-economic and historic structures of oppression. It also “cognitively maps” methodologies for real world, embodied actions, which engage in the politically messy work of decolonization, alongside of an aesthetic, ethical, and democratic impulse, making space for a multiplicity of new musicking “citizen-*subjects*” capable of generating knowledge and acting on the world.¹⁸

Sandoval’s methodology appears within and provides a lucid framework to understand “the season of de-coloniality.”¹⁹ “Coloniality of power” is a term coined by Peruvian sociologist Anibal Quijano who argues that the incorporation of the Americas into the capitalist world-system entailed a “historical-structural heterogeneity” of oppressions in which political-economic forms and infrastructures exist in symbiosis with epistemic deployments of coloniality.²⁰ The season of decoloniality, then, represents both intellectual communities who prefer to draw continuity in terms of continuing economic and epistemic oppressions after partial political decolonization, as well as subalternized communities for whom struggle never ended.²¹ The “decolonial option,” to use the phrase of Walter Dignolo, creates a shift in perspective in which the epistemic terms of postcolonial debates concerning subjectivities transform into material expressions of concrete actions in which the “de-” in decolonial is above all an active prefix.²² Decoloniality as a framework, particularly through the lens of Sandoval’s methodology, resonates with existing postcolonial perspectives in music education, particularly that of Lise Vaugeois, whose work navigates the treacherous spaces of subjectivity, materiality, and the political.²³ Decoloniality, however, provides a parallax shift, which proves useful for engaging in sustained, embodied decolonial activity.

Sandoval argues that the fragmentation of Eurocentric subjectivity in the postmodern condition is not a historically unique moment, but rather, that the very ability of Eurocentric subjectivity to ever “coalesce its own sense of wholeness,” depended upon the fragmentation of other forms of consciousness through colonization.²⁴ Sandoval cites W.E.B. De Bois concept of “split consciousness” as only the most famous example of a litany of theories of subalternized scholars contending with the fragmentation of consciousness wrought by colonization.²⁵ Additionally, Sandoval catalogs critical Eurocentric thinkers who find themselves deconstructing Eurocentric subjectivity, only to be left in despair and isolation after the paths out of the episteme seem closed.²⁶ She argues that Eurocentric fragmentation tends to spiral in individualistic despair, while the oppressed have been able to make the leap from differential consciousness to differential social movement, from the mind to the world, in order to organize collectively and change it.²⁷

Sandoval's methodology consists of "Semiotics, deconstruction, meta-ideologizing, democratics, and differential movement."²⁸ In this methodology, the oppressed read signs of power, deconstruct them, and then "create new 'higher' levels of signification built onto the older, dominant forms of ideology" through meta-ideologizing.²⁹ For Sandoval, meta-ideologizing is the process of "*ideologization of ideology* itself."³⁰ She develops this "technology" by inverting Louis Althusser's proclamation that it is "ideology that interpellates the subject," arguing instead that it is the "citizen-*subject* who interpellates, who calls up ideology."³¹ Put another way: "To deploy a differential oppositional consciousness, one can depend on no (traditional) mode of belief in one's own subject position or ideology; nevertheless, such positions and beliefs are called up and utilized in order to constitute whatever forms of subjectivity are necessary to act in an also (now obviously) constituted social world."³² Meta-ideologizing is a strategy made up of tactics that moves toward democracy.

Meta-ideologizing is the realm of the borders; this is where the leaps from different thinking and different action coalesce in movement toward emancipation.³³ Sandoval analyzes Roland Barthes' *Mythologies* as "one of the first attempts to encode in Western academic technical and 'scientific' language what [she] refers to as the methodology of the oppressed."³⁴ But Barthes's Eurocentric slippage emerges as his theory ends "where it should have met in coalition with those theories of resistance that have been generated by oppressed and colonized peoples. Unable to negotiate that leap, Barthes constructed instead a view... of resistance where the individual practitioner can only act alone, isolated, and in despair."³⁵ It is here in the borders that theory fragments violently into movement, "a kinetic motion that maneuvers, poetically transfigures, and orchestrates while demanding alienation, perversion, and reformation in both spectators and practitioners."³⁶ Barthes falls into a Eurocentric, cyclical, and cynical trap of scholarly representation, a trap that I argue is present to varying degrees in Small and Deleuze. Even as we deploy border thinking, coloniality of power in the form of ideology attempts to ensnare us.³⁷ Instead, in Sandoval's methodology, as in our own decolonial musicking, "the body passes through and is transformed."³⁸

This final section provides a call to revitalize contemporary critical pedagogies with decolonial methodologies oriented toward material and political struggle. From Freire to Small, from Deleuze and Félix Guattari to Sandoval, the question is not merely of transforming the way we think in order to reveal injustice; it is a question of transforming the world. Decolonial musicking as embodied action has incredible potential to aid transformation through that messy realm of politics, coalition, and confrontation. But, as Sandoval reveals, the ethical drive toward decolonization derives not from an individual ethics premised on academic authority, but from collective social movement, regenerated incessantly through

dialogue and democracy, lest the movement is lost. Decolonial musicking can break asunder the great walls between theory/practice, scholarship/education, teacher/student, oppressor/oppressed, and mind/body as we dance, sing, play, and philosophize in the borders together, simultaneously thinking and creating new worlds.

READING SMALL AS DECOLONIAL AUTHOR

Small claims that “music is not a thing at all but an activity, something that people do.”³⁹ This simple statement remains a radical and powerful entry into new ways of relating through our musicking. Small’s theory lays bare the simple and inescapable reality that Western classical music is an ethnic music, just like any other type of music.⁴⁰ The implicit challenge embedded in this idea is the question: Why does one ethnic music enjoy the privilege of so-called universality? Western classical music fancies itself to be universal because a wider context of colonial violence facilitated its ascendancy and epistemic violence facilitates the naturalization of its primacy.

Small argues that musicking is descriptive of all types of musical performance and not prescriptive of certain aesthetic value judgments.⁴¹ Everyone who contributes to a musicking act contributes to musicking. The term musicking denotes a new way of thinking about a complex web of ongoing social relations constituted in an actual performance of musical material. Therefore, musicologists operating within Western classical music’s hegemonic context influence musickers and, in so doing, reproduce Eurocentric epistemic power without necessarily physically participating in musicking performances.

For those of us trained in a Western classical tradition, this paradigm encodes and instructs our musical knowledges, our very manner of perceiving and decoding stimuli related to auditory aesthetic values or social musicking relationships. Even those of us in active resistance against its more zealous prophets remain captured by this paradigm to varying extents. This critique levied at Western classical music is not therefore delivered as a critique of a system of aesthetic value, but rather, a critique of that system’s universality and subsequent propensity to delegitimize, subordinate, appropriate, and tokenize other systems of aesthetic value.

Small’s insistence that musicking is a descriptive category, however, produces a tension in his arguments. On one hand, musicking highlights the ways in which we are always creating and recreating “music,” indicating that there are paths toward changing these patterns. On the other hand, it seems to foreclose the possibility of rupture and movement toward diverse, decolonial musicking, as we—apparently—opt everyday to reproduce the Eurocentrism of Western classical music. Musicking’s abstract *form* can be filled with historical *content*, content

that is often colonial. Paradoxically, Small's historical expertise reveals more equitable, democratic, and decolonial musicking relationships in the margins of history, but when musicking as an analytic engages the academy's false universality, material and epistemic power enclose, and musicking's radical movement is cut short.

This tension produces in Small a consciousness that mirrors Sandoval's critique of Barthes: he creates "a schema in which a coalitional form of consciousness among dominant citizen-subjects committed to the equal distribution of power, and those who have occupied outsider status is made thinkable—and yet remains unthought."⁴² While oppressed musickers shape shift in the borders to survive and struggle, Small fails to make the decolonial and coalitional leap to the borders and instead finds solace in the purity of ideology. Specifically, in his afterword to *Sociology and Music Education*, Small argues that, because music in classrooms represent a limited and Eurocentric perspective, he sees "no alternative to taking the teaching of music out of schools."⁴³

Small's critique of how institutional "socialization" limits different ways of musicking, while it is decidedly radical, is not a particularly novel idea.⁴⁴ In fact, it is strikingly similar to Louis Althusser's critique of educational institutions' role in reproducing dominant ideology, a critique that animates Sandoval's project as well.⁴⁵ To decolonize music in the academy, or musicking relationships outside of institutions, however, would require more nuanced thinking and sustained, collective, and embodied action.

Music education in particular, when conceived as a constantly shifting and amorphous site of *struggle*, presents opportunities for decolonial movement. Such movement would depend on finding coalition in the borders. Decolonial musicking often exists in active resistance against institutions, in an exterior relation. It is from exteriority that decolonial methods of struggle can permeate and radically transform the hegemonic function of dominant institutions. Small's frustrations are understandable given the seeming impossibility of epistemic decolonization. Scholarly critique that leads toward epistemic decolonization can be a weighty affair; for example, see Vaugeois's profound yet daunting critique of how "reason, objectivity and universal value become weapons of oppression when they are conceived as standing above history and personal interest" in the context of music education.⁴⁶

While intense scholarly investigation is vitally important for decolonial activity, it runs headlong into a recalcitrantly colonial world. Scholarship performs the first two steps of the Methodology of the Oppressed, semiotics and deconstruction, but then falters. Deep epistemic bias and material structures of oppression must push us into sustained, embodied movement in the borders. It is only there that collective transformation can begin to heal deep colonial wounds. For many

educators, Small's argument would constitute heresy and perhaps provides little explanation of the profound problems and frustrations that may have led to it.⁴⁷ In collective musicking, grounded in histories of resistance, however, new spaces open up to challenge deeply held beliefs.

Despite the critiques leveled at Small here, musicking remains a radical point of rupture and entry into decolonization. Its accessibility as a concept, its roots in concrete historical content, and its privileging of embodied action over abstract thought all point toward decolonial horizons. Indeed, just like colonization's deep wounds, the circular traps of scholarly representation will remain open for the time. True decolonial healing can occur, however, in collective movement that departs from old oppressions and opens new futures.

In the context of decolonizing musicology, the assemblages of voices silenced and delegitimized by Western classical music's centrality expands beyond "amateur" musicians to embrace the boundless constellations of all decolonial musics. Small's work unveils how Western classical music, though socially and culturally specific, assumes the abstract and universal category of "music."⁴⁸ Furthermore, musicology's privileging of "works of music in the Western tradition" facilitates its ascension as a universal paradigm and episteme.⁴⁹ The uneasy privileging of Western classical musical texts means that on one hand, musicologists treat this tradition as the "model and paradigm for all musical experience" as well as "somehow unique and not to be subjected to the same modes of inquiry as other musics, especially in respect to its social meanings."⁵⁰

Multiplicities of decolonial voices cannot and should not be appropriated into the paradigm of Western classical music. Decolonial musicking continually generates logics, knowledges, and relationships which are illegible and resistant to the dominant episteme. This idea dramatically shifts our focus from privileged texts (scores) and authors (composers) to an infinite number of complex social relationships in process.⁵¹ Formerly central institutions, composers, and thinkers lose their universal authority for decoding musical meaning in the epistemic moment of critique, but in the material terms of a socially constituted world, their power remains largely intact. Then, if every single relationship in musicking is constitutive, and the "whole" is nothing but a sea of interconnected relationships, how could we hope to intervene and decolonize at all? Such an epistemic transition must entail ongoing material processes that address deeply embedded structures of theory and practice.

VOICES IN THE SEA OF COMPLEXITY

Small's musicking revolution of complexities and multiplicities of musicking subjects,⁵² however, exists within a larger context of "postmodern and

poststructuralist trends” in the “crisis of representation” in the late twentieth century.⁵³ David Borgo summarizes this crisis succinctly and richly: “from the sciences to the arts and humanities, researchers in the twentieth century were led, often reluctantly, to shift their focus from objects to relationships, from products to processes, from content to context, and from ideas of permanence to those of permeability and polysemy.”⁵⁴ In other words, the foundational epistemic paradigm lurched seismically while the structures and institutions erected on its once solid ground contorted above. Sandoval characterizes the twentieth century as the moment in which “Western thought can be said to have found its limits,” when the “Euro-American self is able to run a painful gaze back to the construction of its own body, its own psychology, the rationality of its own cultural milieu.”⁵⁵

Musicologists and music education practitioners have enthusiastically employed Deleuze and Guattari as a lens through which to analyze musicking.⁵⁶ These authors’ shared context in the “crisis of representation,” employment of concepts such as the refrain or *ritournelle*, and focus on process point to a productive convergence of theory.⁵⁷ One aspect of Deleuze and Guattari’s work, however, that music scholarship rarely treat honestly, is the revolutionary impetus of their intellectual project.⁵⁸

Deleuze and Guattari’s is a critical theory, which, along with other strains of poststructuralist and postmodern thinking, presented a radical challenge to the hegemonic epistemic framework of Eurocentric modernity.⁵⁹ One important aspect of Deleuze and Guattari’s approach in the context of musicking is its particularly ontological orientation. To elaborate, by focusing on concepts of *becoming*, such as *becoming-music*, Deleuze and Guattari theorize humans as beings in constant and irreducible *processes* of constituting multiplicities.⁶⁰ A strictly epistemic theory remains more detached and abstracted, whereas this ontological theory confronts humans’ *becoming*. Deleuze and Guattari assert that thought and human sociality exist in bodies and spaces constituting larger networks of human and non-human agency.⁶¹

Deleuze and Guattari’s ontology of processes in the world invokes many potential theoretical connections with concrete musicking performances in the world. Lauren Richerme elaborates on this idea by analyzing Deleuze and Guattari in the context of music pedagogy.⁶² She builds her arguments around Deleuze and Guattari’s term multiplicities, which they define as “heterogeneous terms in symbiosis.”⁶³ Richerme explains that “rather than parts of a unified whole, multiplicities are the continuous interaction between their facets.”⁶⁴ The implications of this *processual* ontology are enormous for musicking. Richerme analyses Deleuze and Guattari’s figuration of the body without organs in order to forward a human ontology comprised of cognition, embodiment, emotion, and

sociality.⁶⁵ Richerme, quoting Deleuze and Guattari, explains, “the body without organs makes up the body, existing in a continual state of process that opposes not organs, but the ‘organization of the organs called the organism.’”⁶⁶ The body without organs endeavors to problematize the human and invite questions as to how it *becomes*. More plainly, we might ask: How does a human constitute more than merely a collection of organs? Or, how does musicking constitute more than a score? Becoming is not reductive; it is a complex, ongoing process made up of an infinite number of ever-changing relationships.

This processual ontology means that the musician’s cognition, embodiment, emotion, and sociality are irreducibly connected. Each heterogeneous term of the musician’s ontology exists in a symbiosis, a relationship defined by mutually interdependent complexity. In musicology however, the primacy of the cognition of musical text serves to legitimize and reify the Eurocentric episteme. While the other terms remain present in the world, their lack of legitimacy in theory creates a tension in their dynamics of embodiment, emotion, and sociality in practice. Small’s work was controversial, in part, precisely because it revealed the symphony concert as a social act.⁶⁷ The underlying social dynamics at play in a symphony concert, while not explicitly critiqued by Small, caused severe discomfort for the Western classical music enthusiasts unwilling to reflect on the embodied and social implications of a symphony concert.

Small’s observation that Western classical music has an uneasy relationship with social analysis has a counterpoint: other types of music are often examined primarily through aspects such as embodiment or sociality without addressing elements of cognition. Discourses surrounding the “rhythm” and “soul” of non-Eurocentric musics have a continuing legacy in musicology as well as in a wider cultural context. These discourses serve to “ethnify rhythms” and “feminize cultures;” they construct non-Eurocentric musics as fetishized objects rather than empowered subjects.⁶⁸ Women particularly are objectified through these discourses, in which “the hips and pelvic movements of the mulatta and black woman” transfix the “male gaze.”⁶⁹ In this way, hegemonic discourses deny decolonial musickers the elevated status of rational subjects able to engage in complex cognitive musicking.

For musicologists and educators interested in deconstructing and dismantling the privileging of Eurocentric cognitive analysis over other aspects of musicking, the problems surrounding representation present a paradox. Thomas Solomon’s discussion of the “postcolonial dilemma” in the context of Kofi Agawu’s work is illustrative: while Agawu identifies comparative musicology’s connection with colonialism, “the formalist kind of musical analysis Agawu advocates actually has its origins in the very colonial enterprise he critiques, replicating the discourse that uses the technique of analysis of the high-art canon.”⁷⁰ In this way,

postcolonial and Eurocentric critique can reproduce decolonial musics as fetishized objects, leaving the signification of colonial difference intact. Solomon advocates “re-writing colonial music history from the perspectives of the colonized” as a method for contesting the dilemma.⁷¹ This strategy, however, leaves open the problematic question of who is “re-writing” about whom?

Central to this circular trap of scholarly representation is the fact that our epistemic biases obscure the importance of embodiment, emotion, and sociality for understanding musicking. Put another way, just as cognition is privileged in Western classical music, scholarly knowledges enjoy privilege over the actual musicking performances that they represent. Musicking asserts an ontological symbiosis of cognition, embodiment, emotion, and sociality, but scholars representing decolonial musicking ironically use their *cognitive* authority to legitimize musicking *events*. While musicking invites us to embrace the embodied aspects of music, those of us trained in the Western classical tradition usually depend on disembodied, cognitive authority to theoretically privilege musicking in the world.

This snare points to a deficit in the full embodied, emotional, and social capacities for musickers trained in a Western classical tradition, trapped in the coloniality of cognition. The aesthetic potential that we can imagine blossoming from multiplicities of decolonial musickers ignites our imaginations, but we continue to operate from an episteme in which scholars possess *knowledge* about the *action* of colonially-marked *bodies*. Coloniality of power in our historically constituted musical world makes invisible the bodies and voices of the oppressed, while both hegemonic and critical thought often seem to float around in disembodied, universal non-space. Not only are oppressed musickers capable of the sign reading and deconstruction that occurs in the academy, albeit from different epistemic frameworks, these methodologies are far better suited for the embodied, collective movement we need to decolonize.

Deleuze and Guattari are similarly guilty when they declare: “we shall speak of an *absolute limit* every time the schizo-flows pass through the wall, scramble all the codes, and deterritorialize the socius: the body without organs is the deterritorialized socius, the wilderness where the decoded flows run free, the end of the world, the apocalypse.”⁷² Just as Eurocentric temporality implodes in its apocalyptic moment, however, it should open not toward an abstract wilderness, but toward other decolonial temporalities, concrete sites of contestation and struggle. Barthes and Small teeter on the edge; Deleuze and Guattari leap into the abyss. We must explode beyond this absolute limit, not to a void, but toward coalition, toward a humble and radical place where other types of theorizing transform us collectively, where we move in other methodologies toward liberation.

DECOLONIAL MUSICKING AS EMANCIPATORY PRAXIS

So far, I have used the Methodology of the Oppressed, which Sandoval argues is “useful to all citizen-subjects,” in order to call up ideologies from Small to Deleuze and Guattari.⁷³ This theoretical assemblage, constructed though meta-ideologizing, now reaches its limit. Here, its components must escape the realms of the textual and cognitive in order to fragment into embodied practice, “*according to an ethical commitment to equalize power.*”⁷⁴ This moment, entering into practice and relinquishing a scholarly monopoly on power, opens space for democratic movement. Previously suppressed scholar-activist-musickers emerge from-below and in the borders, performing their own methodologies moving toward liberation. The despair of isolated, Eurocentric critique gives way to jubilant struggle, as a polytonal multiplicity of voices erupts into new forms of consciousness.

Cervantes’s scholarship and performance serve as a concrete and illustrative example of a border methodology. Cervantes reflects how “decolonial sounds on the margins” impacted a seminar he gave to K-12 Texas music teachers.⁷⁵ In the 3-day workshop, he connected Black and Latino/a musical histories to “musical expression and struggles for social justice amidst histories of racism, dehumanization, and colonization.”⁷⁶ To close this workshop, Cervantes asked the educators, a group that was ninety seven percent white, to perform raps of their own creation.⁷⁷ Such a move, demonstrated to skeptical and recalcitrant teachers that “composing a song was a lot more difficult than it appeared.”⁷⁸ Cervantes argues that “these teachers learned that the art of rapping was more than making words simply rhyme and that the practice involves breath control, organization skills, rhythm, the ability to articulate your voice, and conveying messages that reflect social experience and condition.”⁷⁹ In this way, it was the challenge of using the body differently that opened spaces in which the cognitive, emotional, and social elements of decolonial musicking could emerge to challenge hegemonic relations and colonial histories.

Such moments of decolonial rupture shift the epistemic, aesthetic landscape and open up novel possibilities, in which critical scholars discover coalitional forms of consciousness rooted in real social movements and un-critical or even hostile parties can engage with more accessible and powerful methods of popular deconstruction. This politically messy border space led one of the educators from Cervantes’s workshop to argue that his approach would be a “a good way to teach Texas history.”⁸⁰ Indeed, such an approach would not only engage in a people’s history from-below, it would facilitate embodied engagement in ongoing historical trajectories. It is the symbiosis of embodied action, cognition, emotion, and sociality of decolonial musicking that pushes its subjects to intervene into unfolding histories of oppression.

Cervantes inhabits a nebulous border position as he navigates between his own scholarly expertise as defined by the academy, as well as his expertise within a different type of community, that of artists engaged in struggles for liberation. Cervantes's musical group, Third Root, declares in a song: "this ain't rapping/this is scholarship."⁸¹ Such language is not an abstract challenge from a position of exteriority but rather a declaration of struggle in which Cervantes engages from within the academy as well. In his university classes at the University of Texas at San Antonio, he weaves rap and hip-hop into his classes, providing students similar weapons of critique and struggle, which leap between different forms of consciousness.⁸² In the borders, epistemic power unravels and musickers find paths of decolonial departure.

Cervantes is but one component of multiplicities of decolonial musickers in struggle, struggles that are constantly occurring despite the attempts of the hegemonic Eurocentric episteme to make them invisible. It is in the linkages to broader histories and movements that such decolonial musicking taps into its subversive potential: new voices emerge from-below and in the borders, in turn, opening up new spaces for embodied coalition. In this vein, the radical thrust of Freire's revolutionary project spring to mind, with renewed relevance and resonance. Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* argues, "only power that springs from the weakness of the oppressed will be sufficiently strong to free both" the oppressor and oppressed.⁸³

Freire's pedagogy invites us into a space of decolonial praxis. Such a praxis does not necessarily share the trajectory of the *praxial* school exemplified by thinkers such as Thomas Regelski, although ongoing discussions regarding the possible points of intersection and of rupture merit further exploration.⁸⁴ The intellectual lineage instead shares a closer relation to the materialism of Karl Marx before it is revisited and decolonized by Freire: "Discovery cannot be purely intellectual but must involve action; nor can it be limited to mere activism, but must include serious reflection: only then will it be praxis."⁸⁵ In the spirit of Freire's radical project, decolonial border methodologies attempt not to subsume diverse epistemologies and methods of struggle, but rather, to provide frameworks for diverse subjects to engage in decolonial struggle across borders.

Specific pedagogical approaches overflow to "propose the transformation of reality itself so that universities can be renewed."⁸⁶ Frameworks of decolonial musicking could help to facilitate coalitions across various academic traditions as well as across oppressed sectors of the population struggling for their liberation through their musicking. In the politically contingent borderlands of aesthetics, ethics, social movement, and decolonization, decolonial musicking proposes a methodology in which musicking from-below decolonizes authorized knowledge generation and the bodies of its practitioners through a collective transformation of the body politic. To realize the aesthetic potential of the full spectrum of

human creativity would mean to smash asunder the confines of the Eurocentric episteme. As this process unfolds, however, decolonial struggle will overflow the academy to radically dis- and re-order materiality and epistemology in the larger society. The fullest range of decolonial human voices becomes an imperative, not only for more liberatory dynamics within musicology and music education, but also for decolonizing and liberating society itself.

Decolonial border methodologies attempt to rupture the processes of hegemonic knowledge generation, through new forms of learning and struggle from-below and in the borders. These methodologies would progress as concrete struggles for liberation, to situate political confrontation at its appropriate register: the struggle for new worlds. The extent to which this is possible depends upon our collective capacities to engage across subjectivities, through Sandoval's "meta-ideologizing," toward those elusive practices of democracies and social movement. This essay begins with a reflection on a political event, which betrays deep subjective chasms within the world of music and beyond. Decolonial musicking methodologies pose the question: To what extent can multiplicity coalesce in coalitional social movement to generate and leverage future decolonizing events? Answers to such a question could only reside in concrete sites of struggle that open new decolonial horizons.

"Third Root Radio," the opening track of Third Root's album *LIBERTAD*, serves as a reminder of the urgency and disorder of decolonial struggle. At the end of the last verse, the beat begins a slow fade as eventually only spoken words confront and unsettle the listener's inner psychic space, pushing it outward toward the politics of decolonial movement: "Can't rap about it/catchin' bullets for the truth/can't write about it/catchin' bullets for the truth/can't be about it/catchin' bullets for the truth/We're catchin' bullets for the truth."⁸⁷

The deep historical truths of colonization are inextricably wrapped up in ongoing truths of coloniality today. We must have courage to speak the unspeakable in order to think and build new worlds that seem unthinkable. We may arrive here through commitments to aesthetics, ethics, deconstruction, or democracy, but these arrivals depart into a socially constituted world, demanding politics. As the beat fades and the veneer of our philosophizing dissipates into collective movement, we must deploy our truths with courage, for if it is indeed a question of decolonizing, we may catch bullets for it.

NOTES

¹Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 36.

²Pierpaolo Polzonetti, "Don Giovanni Goes to Prison: Teaching Opera Behind Bars," *Musicology Now*, February 16, 2016, accessed May 11, 2016, http://musicologynow.ams-net.org/2016/02/don-giovanni-goes-to-prison-teaching_16.html.

³Rod Dreher, "SJWs At The Opera," *The American Conservative*, February 19, 2016, accessed May 12, 2016, <http://www.theamericanconservative.com/dreher/social-justice-warriors-opera/>. Brownamsavenger, "#AMSSOWHITE," Brownamsavenger, February 18, 2016, accessed May 11, 2016, <http://brownamsavenger.livejournal.com/612.html>.

⁴Classical music's civilizing mission: Kira Thurman, "Classical Music and the Civilizing Mission Ideology," *Schenkerian Gang Signs*, November 22, 2015, accessed May 11, 2016 <http://schenkeriangangsigns.blogspot.cl/2015/11/classical-music-and-civilizing-mission.html?m=1>. The quoted text appears in Polzonetti's original article: Pierpaolo Polzonetti, "Don Giovanni Goes to Prison."

⁵Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1998), 3.

⁶Chela Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).

⁷Marco Antonio Cervantes, "Teaching Decolonial Sounds on the Margins: Reflections on a K-12 Teacher Workshop Covering Black & Brown Musical Transculturation in Texas." *Multicultural Education* 22, no. 3–4 (Spring 2015): 8–14.

⁸For a discussion of the complex continuity between Fanon's variable approaches in *Black Skin, White Masks* and *The Wretched of the Earth*, see George Ciccariello-Maher, *Decolonizing Dialectics* (Durham, London: Duke University Press, 2017), 47–103.

⁹Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (London: J. Currey 1986). For decolonizing the mind in the context of musicology, see Thomas Solomon, "Where is the Postcolonial in Ethnomusicology?" in *Ethnomusicology in East Africa; Perspectives from Uganda and Beyond*, ed. Sylvia Nannyonga-Tamusuza and T. Solomon (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 2012), 219.

¹⁰Glen Kuecker, "From the Alienation of Neoliberal Globalization to Transmodern Ways of Being: Epistemic Change and the Collapse of the Modern World-System," *Journal of Globalization Studies* 5, no. 1 (2014): 154.

¹¹Anibal Quijano, "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America," *Nepantla: Views from South* 1 no. 3 (2000): 533–80. To take the example of the prison industrial complex, discussed on Musicologynow.org, it is necessary to examine how foundational acts of colonial violence constitute both power and knowledge. Slavery in the United States facilitated its ascendancy into a hegemonic economic power and, consequently, facilitated its military and geopolitical power; this foundational violence shapes subsequent institutions, while masking the nature of this matrix of power through regimes of knowledge that normalize individuals to its conditions. See Edward E Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism*, (New York: Basic Books, 2014); Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: The New Press, 2012); Angela Y. Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003).

¹²William Cheng, "Musicology, Freedom, and the Uses of Anger." *Musicology Now*, February 21, 2016, <http://musicologynow.amsnet.org/2016/02/musicology-freedom-and-uses-of-anger.html>. Accessed May 11, 2016

¹³Alain Badiou, *Logics of Worlds: Being and Event II*, trans. Alberto Toscano (London: Continuum, 2009), 391.

¹⁴Thomas Nail discusses the Badiou/Deleuze debate surrounding pre- and post-evental perspectives. See Thomas Nail, *Returning to Revolution: Deleuze, Guattari and Zapatismo*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 87–89. I attempt to synthesize these tendencies—not in the “future anterior,” as Thomas Nail does—but rather, through an open, decolonial methodology.

¹⁵“#AMSSOWHITE,” Brownamsavenger; William Cheng, “Musicology, Freedom, and the Uses of Anger.”

¹⁶Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 36: “Decolonization, which sets out to change the order of the world, is, obviously, a program of complete disorder.”

¹⁷Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 113, 31.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 6.

²⁰Quijano, “Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America,” 554, 571.

²¹*Globalization and the Decolonial Option*, eds. Walter D. Mignolo and Arturo Escobar, (New York: Routledge, 2010).

²²Walter Mignolo, “Epistemic Disobedience, Independent Thought and Decolonial Freedom,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 26, nos. 7–8 (2009): 159–81.

²³Lise Vaugeois, “Social Justice and Music Education: Claiming the Space of Music Education as a Site of Postcolonial Contestation” *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education* 6/4, (2007): 163–200. http://act.maydaygroup.org/articles/Vaugeois6_4.pdf; “Examining the Political: Materiality, Ideology, and Power in the Lives of Professional Musicians,” *Philosophy of Music Education Review* 15, no. 1 (2007): 5–22.

²⁴Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 33.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 85.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 33, 113.

²⁷*Ibid.*, 113.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 65.

²⁹*Ibid.*, 110.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 108.

³¹*Ibid.*, 31.

³²*Ibid.*

³³“Border pedagogy...that provides educators with the opportunity to rethink the relations between the centers and the margins of power...[and] also challenge those institutional and ideological boundaries that have historically masked their own relations of power behind complex forms of distinction and privilege.” Henry Giroux, “Border Pedagogy as Postmodern Resistance” in *Postmodernism, Feminism, and Cultural Politics: Redrawing Educational Boundaries*, ed. by Henry Giroux, (The State University of New York Press, 1991): 359.

³⁴Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 82.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 113.

³⁶Ibid., 44.

³⁷Ramón Grosfoguel, “Decolonizing Post-Colonial Studies and Paradigms of Political Economy: Transmodernity, Decolonial Thinking, and Global Coloniality,” in *Transmodernity: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Ludo-Hispanic World* 1 no. 1 (2011): 4. Grosfoguel proposes an epistemic “border thinking,” which creates “critical dialogue” between “diverse . . . projects.” Such “decolonization of knowledge would require to take seriously the epistemic perspective/cosmologies/insights of critical thinkers from the Global South thinking from and with subalternized racial/ethnic/sexual spaces and bodies.”

³⁸Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 36.

³⁹Small, *Musicking*, 2.

⁴⁰Ibid., 4.

⁴¹Ibid., 9.

⁴²Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 113.

⁴³Small, “Afterword” in *Sociology and Music Education*, ed. by Ruth Wright (Farnham, Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2010): 288.

⁴⁴Ibid., 283.

⁴⁵Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses” in *Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. by Vincent B. Leitch, (New York: WW Norton & Co., 2001): 1476–1508; Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 43.

⁴⁶Vaugeois, “Social Justice and Music Education,” 165.

⁴⁷For criticism of Small’s claim, see Marja-Leena Juntunen, Sidsel Karlsen, Anna Kuoppamäki, Tuulikki Laes, and Sari Muhonen, “Envisioning Imaginary Spaces for Musicking: Equipping Students for Leaping into the Unexplored,” *Music Education Research* 16, no. 3 (March 2014): 251–66.

⁴⁸Small, *Musicking*, 2.

⁴⁹Ibid., 3.

⁵⁰Ibid., 3.

⁵¹Ibid., 92.

⁵²The title of this section borrows imagery from David Borgo, “Musicking on the Shores of Multiplicity and Complexity,” *Parallax* 13, no. 4 (2007): 92–107.

⁵³Ibid., 92.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 8.

⁵⁶David Borgo, “Musicking on the Shores of Multiplicity and Complexity; Juliet Hess, “Radical Musicking: Towards a Pedagogy of Social Change,” *Music Education Research* 16, no. 3 (March 28, 2014): 229–50; Lauren Kapalka Richerme, “Who Are Musickers?” *Philosophy of Music Education Review* 23, no. 1 (Spring 2015): 82–101; Gary Tomlinson, “Sign, Affect, and Musicking before the Human,” *Boundary 2* 43, no. 1 (February 2016): 143–72.

⁵⁷Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987): 299–350.

⁵⁸Thomas Nail, *Returning to Revolution: Deleuze, Guattari and Zapatismo*, 3.

⁵⁹The theories that have been called poststructuralist or postmodern (frequently against their authors' wishes) often dramatically differ from and even clash with each other. One such contested issue at stake is the claim that poststructuralist and postmodern theories are Eurocentric critiques of Eurocentrism. Walter Dignolo, "Coloniality of Power and Subalternity," in *The Latin American Subaltern Studies Reader*, ed. by Ileana Rodríguez (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2001): 435. My analysis treats poststructuralism and postmodernism as Eurocentric. These theories undermine Western epistemology's hegemony but do not necessarily provide paths to new epistemologies.

⁶⁰Gary Tomlinson, "Sign, Affect, and Musicking before the Human," 168.

⁶¹Deleuze's term "assemblage" represents "an idea . . . to connote indeterminacy, emergence, becoming, processuality, turbulence and the sociomateriality of phenomena." See Colin McFarlane, "Assemblage and Critical Urbanism," *City* 15 no 2. (2011): 206.

⁶²Richerme, "Who Are Musickers?" 82.

⁶³Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 249.

⁶⁴Richerme, "Who Are Musickers?" 84.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 83.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, 93.

⁶⁷Small, *Musicking*, 4.

⁶⁸Frances R. Aparicio, "Ethnifying Rhythms, Feminizing Cultures," In *Music in the Racial Imagination*, ed. by Ronald Radano and Philip V. Bohlman (Chicago: University Press, 2000): 95.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 97.

⁷⁰Solomon, "Where is the Postcolonial in Ethnomusicology?" 235–6.

⁷¹*Ibid.*, 234.

⁷²Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 176.

⁷³Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed*, 178.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, 61.

⁷⁵Cervantes, "Teaching Decolonial Sounds on the Margins," 8.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, 9.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 11.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, 8.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, 12.

⁸¹Third Root, "Libertad (feat Mellow Man Ace)" from LIBERTAD, (2016; <http://thirdroot.bandcamp.com>) Digital Album.

⁸²Deborah Silliman Wolfe, "Marcos Cervantes is Getting Back to his Roots," College of Education and Human Development. <http://www.utsa.edu/spectrum/2012/story/feature-marco-cervantes.html>. Accessed May 7, 2017.

⁸³Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group Ltd, 1993), 44.

⁸⁴Roger Mantie, Review of *A Brief Introduction to a Philosophy of Music and Music Education as Social Praxis*, by Thomas A. Regelski, *Philosophy of Music Education Review* 24, no. 2 (Fall 2016): 213–219.

⁸⁵Freire, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 65.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, 43.

⁸⁷Third Root, “Third Root Radio” from LIBERTAD, (2016; <http://thirdroot.bandcamp.com>) Digital Album.

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