INTERVIEW

A Sediment Diversion for the Audible World

Ryan C. Clarke in Dialogue with Michael Nardone*

Introduction

Ryan C. Clarke is an ethnomusicologist and coastal geologist who studies surface processes, focusing particularly on sedimentation and stratification. These ever-shifting landscapes, according to Clarke, exist in a feedback loop with their sonic regimes. He theorizes how a territory's sonic repertoires exist as part of its topsoil, and how these repertoires contribute significantly to the formation of its geological strata, which in turn impacts what is sonorously and audibly possible on those grounds. With meticulousness and a fascinating capacity for drawing connections, Clarke studies these dynamics in the effort to comprehend the social-ecological composition of the present.

I first came upon his work through the essay "Reverse Hallucinations in the Lower Delta"[1] and its accompanying audiovisual mixtape *Care Forgot*.[2] These vital works articulate the historical palimpsest of the present and offer up future pathways for cultures of thriving difference, resistance, and conviviality.

As a starting point for our exchange, I proposed that we read Tiffany Lethabo King's *The Black Shoals: Offshore Formations of Black and Native*

* This dialogue is the third, augmented iteration of an ongoing exchange between the two interlocutors. Xenia Benivolski published its first iteration in *e-flux's* YOU CAN'T TRUST MUSIC, which she edited in 2022. The second iteration was published in Michael Nardone's *Convivialities: Dialogues on Poetics* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 2025; with permission).

1 Ryan Clarke, "Reverse Hallucinations in the Lower Delta," *Rhizome*, May 25, 2020, https://rhizome.org/editorial/2020/may/26/reverse-hallucinations-in-the-lower-delta/.

2 Ryan Clarke, *Care Forgot: A Southern Electronics Visual Mixtape*, Vimeo, uploaded May 26, 2020, https://vimeo.com/422880874.

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Studies[3] as a way to propel our thinking on the imbrication of coastal geologies and cultural discourses. Our discussion moves swiftly from this initial point to consider delta processes, procedures of avulsion and extraction, the anti-imperial rhythm systems that Clarke calls "unleveed musics," and his remarkable, important conceptualization of the sediment diversion as a way to resist those forces that conspire to claim, contain, and foreclose the world.

The following exchange took place in conversation and in correspondence between New Orleans and Montréal during the winter of 2022 and the autumn of 2024.

— Michael Nardone

Interview

MICHAEL NARDONE: *In* The Black Shoals, *Tiffany Lethabo King thinks with the shifting geologic and oceanic formation of the shoal in order to situate and spatialize a methodological approach. The shoal is, according to King, "an accumulation of granular materials … that through sedimentation create a bar or barrier that is difficult to pass and, in fact, a 'danger to navigation.'" The shoal is a "shifty formation" that can "erode over time, drift, and eventually accumulate in another location," and due to this perpetual errantry and unpredictability, it "exceeds full knowability/mappability." "Materially," she writes, the shoal is "a site where movement as usual cannot proceed."*[4] *Beginning from this terrain and the careful navigation it calls for, King then approaches her particular subject of inquiry: a theoretical conceptualization of the relationship and dialogic traffic between Black and Indigenous studies in the Americas through a series of points-of-encounter just offshore.*

In resonance with King's offering, I wonder if you might discuss the relation of the shoal to the delta, describe what a delta is, geologically, and what this physical formation might offer up as we begin to think about the acoustics and the territory of the Lower Mississippi Delta?

3 Tiffany Lethabo King, *The Black Shoals: Offshore Formations of Black and Native Studies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019).

4 Lethabo King, *The Black Shoals*, 2–3.

RYAN C. CLARKE: In the most basic of terms, a delta is a discrete bulge of the shoreline formed at the point a river enters an ocean, sea, lake, lagoon, or other standing body of water. The bulge is an accumulation of sediment as it is depositing more quickly than it can be redistributed via waves or tides. A paper from Jaap Nienhuis acknowledged that there are more than 11,000 deltas around the world,[5] but, for the sake of simplicity, I'll be imagining large rivers that in turn form the deltas that most people would acknowledge as such. This all happens, of course, if there is enough sediment in the river (a source) for a delta to form (a sink).

A delta follows a life cycle of around one thousand to two thousand years with a clear growth phase and deterioration phase. In the growth phase, a river has been "captured" into a stable place of deposition. As a result, the delta rapidly grows toward its own relative stability. But, as this bulge at the end of the river gets higher and higher, the river finds itself working harder to deposit the sediment at the top or even around this vertically accumulated earthen structure. So, the river shifts laterally toward another part of the shoreline, or avulses to another delta lobe. This begins the growth process for another area nearby to start its own new delta, but it also begins the death of the previously mentioned delta.

Shoals are dependent on deltas: a shoal is an abandoned outer structure that forms from detachment from a waning delta. When a delta is active, it spreads, or progrades, out into whichever body of water it's depositing into. During the abandonment stage of a previously active delta, tides and waves, once powerless against the mighty river flow, now have enough force to rework the nearby deposits. This leads to an erosional headland that quickly gets detached into what is known as a barrier island. With later submergence under sea level, this drowned or subaqueous barrier island is now understood as a sand shoal.

As a site of speculative understanding, deltas and their cycles are rich in knowledge reworked as Black methodology and logics: the nonlinearity of a delta is evident in its inherent procedure of avulsion (sorrowful songs avulse to gospel avulses to blues avulses to R&B avulses to jazz avulses to rock avulses to techno and rap, all producing their own discrete but interconnected lobes), both expanding but stacking beside. But what happens when structure denies avulsion, such as, for example, mass construction of levees along the Mississippi River after the Great Flood of 1927 or capitalism commodifying what it once thought of as noise (field songs) into extractive resource (modern

5 J. H. Nienhuis et al., "Global-Scale Human Impact on Delta Morphology Has Led to Net Land Area Gain," *Nature* 577 (2020): 514–18.

music industry)? Understanding modern Black infrastructure as having antecedent geologies, underground forms that inform what happens on the surface, can lead to many questions: how extraction of rich soils leads to physical degradation, how capitalism can be understood as a colonial mapping project and the inherent ephemerality of a delta refusing to carry permanence and to impose such upon it is violence (through delusion), how shoal production and its processes can be viewed through another production, Black cultural production, each with their own internal and industrial stressors reworking themselves within the tension of external forces.

An example: Cubit was an oyster fisherman in 1862 whose two daughters didn't want to take the Mississippi River all the way down to its terminus to get into an adjacent bay, Bay Rondo, so he cut a bank of the river and incidentally made what geologists now understand as "sediment diversions," a procedure used in the replenishment of a deteriorating wetland. His cut, now called Cubits Gap, was a mistake that ended up building a fully formed subdelta in less than fifty years. Cubits Gap can be seen as a knot of memory where, woven into its process of existence, we can elucidate further Black methodologies. Where can we find our next Cubits Gap?

All of this assumes Blackness as an inherently ephemeral (fleeting) depositional/erosional process and any violence enacted upon it is something akin to weathering (American South, in situ) or erosional (weathering involving transport, i.e., the great migration). What is gained and lost in these processes?

Acoustically, sound plays a pivotal role in this speculative coastal geology. As the shoal ruptures a framework of previously thought binaries between Blackness and Indigeneity, so do Black cities of the Delta. Mardi Gras season can be seen as a shoal, a tarrying or procession—a wading in the water. The opaqueness of a second line comes to mind, another bulge that avulses from Orleans Street to Canal Street between hurricane seasons and river years. How the humid sea-surface temperature of the Gulf waters lends itself to fog signals, often in lieu of lighthouses. To hear is to see down here. Sound is also a discrete bulge, not with hard lines but with felt ranges. The geology of the space informs those navigating and building on top, an antecedent geology of Blackness.

MN: *Thank you, Ryan, for establishing a profound ground for engaging this active terrain. You've introduced a number of possible directions to move in—sediments and lobes, procedures of avulsion and extraction, antecedent geology, mapping and the colonizing delusion of enforcing permanence, Cubits*

Gap, as well as an epistemology and acoustemology of the landscape—and I want to take up each of these points in turn.

I'm thrilled by your smooth linking of the delta's geological processes to its ecology of musicking. It's folded within your sentences, and I'm wondering if you can make more explicit how you understand this interrelation. And can you elaborate specifically with the example of the Mississippi Delta as to what forces or perspectives or incorporated structures (in both the geological and sonic-cultural senses that we are developing here) attempt to deny avulsion, to control the deposition of sediments, and to extract its rich soils?

RCC: For those who feel the Black Atlantic is a sturdy lens for viewing diasporic cultural movement and production, the Mississippi River is both a useful and proximal example (or a proximal being? partner? elder?) to find a through line between colonial and neocolonial stress mutation on a landscape. Nineteenth-century Czech composer Antonín Dvořák celebrated negro spirituals as "product of the soil."[6] In his overconfidence that the spiritual was truly American music of the land and not of state, he also hints at a metalanguage I find personally insightful in understanding music as a result of a physical, tilling process as much as it is an aural one. Field songs: a term giving equal weight to the land as the shouts given in, to, and of.

To veer away from Dvořák's Americentricity toward a more Mississippian understanding of Black cultural production, we can look to sorrow songs, spirituals, gospel, and predominantly something I'm broadly calling first-wave Black genres as *unleveed musics*. This is a genre where styles of song were pulsating responses overbanked into the southern plain with relatively minimal constraint or interferences on the music-making outside of the socioeconomic pressures for Black folks. This is to say the music industry wasn't signposting desire for Black musicians, these were folkloric tools that had more function than marketability. Both the pre-industrial engagement of Black music of the time and the relative freedom of the river to flood as it wished were obviously not wholly positive, but the understanding that these floods were needed to continue a fertile and healthy wetland was well known. It wasn't until the Great Flood of 1927 that some form of externally controlled infrastructure was instituted where, in two decades' time, the majority of the Mississippi would be leveed and dammed (damned), resulting in a riverine Catch-22: those living on its banks indeed now found annual safety from overbanking floods, but the land was effectively disconnected from the renourishing soil of the river itself, now

6 "Real Value of Negro Melodies," *New York Herald*, May 21, 1893.

rendered vulnerable by their newfound dependence on fallible structures. Such a structure also begins the era of modern Louisiana wetland loss, with the general consensus on it beginning in 1932.

To keep listening to the Mississippi River and understand its history as a knowledge system, not as a playful metaphor, one must consider Black cultural production alongside Western riverine control structures. For the Mississippi, it was Fort Randall Dam where, in 1952, the single largest decrease of suspended sediment load in the Mississippi River was recorded. For Black folk, it was the ratification of the race record in 1920 with OKeh Records releasing Mamie Smith's "Crazy Blues/It's Right Here for You," further transmuting the mass commodification of Blackness into the form of something manuel arturo abreu considers the "financialization of affect."[7] This moment is tangible evidence of epistemological bifurcations between Black people, their work, and the manufactured inherence of alienation with one's own labor. As an extension of their ontological fungibility through chattel slavery, the music industry pantomimes this series of colonial relations with incentivization of the race record in the 1920s, later with the Telecommunications Act in 1996, and with the Digital Millennium Copyright Act in 1998. Through governmental regulation, bending the material capacity for Black expression to be broadcasted writ large on its own accord. These structures contained what I'm calling second-wave or leveed Black musics: rap, Detroit techno, Chicago house, and jazz. Such sweet thunder proved too enticingly extractive to let be. Now, ever-new levees continue to restrict new topographies to be deposited. Spotify playlist algorithms not-so-quietly inform musicians what their music should sound like and how often it should be played. Silicon rhythm has no swing, too optimized and too quantized—not the meter soil people know. Manuel de Landa spoke to this in 1996 with respect to cultures attuned to the rhythm of the tropical cyclone:

> It is a perfectly rhythmic creature: it blows in one direction for six months of the year, blows in the other direction for another six months, and every sea-faring people in Asia that made a living from the sea had to live with the rhythm of the monsoon. The monsoon gave those cultures their rhythm. If you want to go that way, well, you have to go that way in the summer, then you get there and you have to wait for the winter to come back. You have to plan your life to that rhythm.[8]

7 manuel arturo abreu, "afterschool semester #1 manuel arturo abreu," Youtube, 7:15, uploaded October 19, 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MaEW4YGtDtI.

8 Konrad Becker and Miss M., "An Interview with Manuel de Landa," Virtual Futures

From another conceptual perspective, the Mississippi lends itself to a framework built by George E. Lewis of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians and professor at Columbia University—Afrological and Eurological systems. The Mississippi and the American South's geology is clearly interested in horizontality as a means to build and to sustain itself. Other concepts the Mississippi is interested in are ephemerality and movement, as noted within shoals or barrier islands discussed above. Delta waning and avulsion could be seen as geological kin to burning cultures in various Native American tribes, the understanding that life and death both sit in the same circle. The Mississippi, with its simultaneous avulsions and lobe building, understands this as a survival practice as well and to impose a delusion of permanence (levees) is to kill it (not a death, murder)—something so clearly seen in southern Louisiana wetland's trilemma of oil withdrawal, subsidence, and sea-level rise. Without the banks consistently flooding, there are no means to combat these unnatural adversaries. Leveeing, extraction, and their ilk impose a verticality or hegemony into an environment that is unconcerned with height.

The flatness of a second line, where there's no clear understanding of who's the dominant performer in a procession (possession), or a ring shout in Congo Square, or other Afrologics like call-and-response, repetition within a drum circle, the importance of improvisation as a cosmology (a position beyond music), or Black dance music where the end of a song is less resolution and more extended hand, only asking for the next song to continue to be in communion beside. These horizontal Afrologics are reflections between the music and the environment. But who's looking at who?

This deltaic understanding is close to Deleuzian rhizomes but not synonymous with them: a bunch of tributaries depositing roaming lobes connected through a shifting source network where the cyclical nature of the river channel captures results in multiple depositional centers. Interconnected like the rhizome, yes, but not interdependent nor centralized. Instead, an emphasis on shifting sites of dominant deposition as needed for the system's health. Something akin to what techno producer and NON Worldwide co-founder Melika Ngombe Kolongo, a.k.a. Nkisi, calls in DeForrest Brown Jr.'s podcast series *Techno at the End of the Future*, "a decentralized rhythm strategy,"[9] where as one rhythm gets subsumed by the mainstream

(Warwick, 1996), World-Information Institute, accessed December 5, 2024, http://www.to.or.at/delanda/intdelanda.htm.

9 *Techno at the End of the Future*, podcast hosted by DeForrest Brown Jr., episode 1: "London," Camden Arts Centre and HKW Berlin, September 2021, https://archiv.hkw.de/en/pro-

or fades away, another rhythm is already popping up somewhere else, ready to continue the goal of getting people together.

There's something more direct going on in the term *strategy*. To speak explicitly, it's a literal life-saving pattern. A pattern of life no different than a drum-framed African cosmology.

Music, and a lot of the information inside of music, have been really worthwhile to Black people. I think it's what drew us together through most of colonialism. It's what held us together during the Civil Rights era. Encoded theories of liberation inside songcraft. Hymnals performing as camouflaged text to better understand what it meant to fight for our lives. Notes to pass on and remember. Even now, Katrina, and memories of Katrina, are embedded in songs still. How did we survive? The archive is woven by and between the tones.

How can we contribute to a counterarchitecture while engaging in traditional knowledge systems? Trying to inform the perils of human-induced collapse into nonvocal forms of understanding is incredibly important. We must learn to respond appropriately to the tones of life. This quickly becomes a matter of: How do we better value ourselves? How do we better hear each other? How do we take care of each other?

MN: *I'm pausing to think with this phrase of yours,* unleveed musics*: music made by those who negotiate the modernizing imperial fantasy of control over nature and natural (rhythmic) systems, who know the protection promised with such "control" is not and will not be extended to them in the duration of social crisis (*when the levee breaks*, via Kansas Joe McCoy and Memphis Minnie, they will* have no place to stay*), who adapt their lives in the face of recurring floods and the resulting social crises and thereby imagine a mode of existence in their expectation so as to survive and thrive beyond them. And to continue your connection of topography to music-making: the word* levee *comes from the colonial French of the Mississippi Delta, from* lever, to rise*; so, an* unleveed music *is one that sits below,* with *and* in *the shifting conditions of soils and sediments. Such musics—in the perspectives and (horizontal) forms of composition they articulate—bear the traces of these negotiations, imaginings, tactics.*

In thinking about a "decentralized rhythm strategy," your question from above, "Where can we find our next Cubits Gap?" begins to resonate more resolutely in my mind now. The sediment diversion is an act in rhythmic

gramm/projekte/2020/on_music/podcast_on_music/techno_at_the_end_of_the_future.php.

listening with the Delta and its cycles. It is a way of perpetuating horizontality—a horizontality against the militarized will of the petrocapitalist state and its proponents, its desire for a verticality sustained only on its own terms, and the settler-colonial modes of appropriation and accumulation that are its premise as well as its ongoing effect.

So in thinking about these "horizontal Afrologics"—the uncertain, shifting lead in an ad hoc ensemble and the ethics of improvisation, to name only two of the facets you state above—and how they are reflections between an environment and its musics, I'm wondering if you might speculate how these praxes in the music of the lower Delta might reflect back to thinking with the geological and ecological? Is it too much to ask of an unleveed music that it might cultivate some mode of resistance against that trilemma you name above of extraction, subsidence, and sea-level rise?

RCC: I'm unsure if unleveed music can *do* anything outside of getting people together. It's like asking water to do anything other than flow. It's the structures that surround the music that are its refusal, preventing it from doing much of anything other than being a manipulated vector toward unsustainable accumulation of wealth and power.

Two proposals after the Great Flood of 1927—the Mississippi River and Tributaries Project (1928) and The Flood Control Act of 1936, respectively—brought about an almost complete leveeing of the Mississippi River, with every theoretical drop ending at the mouths of the river. With this confinement, any pollutant that finds its way into the river is there until it reaches the Gulf of Mexico. Because we've assumed levees as an inarguable fact of life, there's a subconscious cultural understanding that it's no emergency that a metric ton of nitrogen makes its way into the river annually. And because there's no floodplain to distribute such sediments, the Gulf of Mexico now carries an oxygen-depleted (hypoxia) zone of 6,952 square miles, mapped as of 2019. Modern industry—of which I've named southern music and the engineering of the Mississippi as two examples that are spatiotemporal kin—has attempted to lead us to the conclusion that we have created at a scale that we can no longer destroy. Modern industry has produced a sort of atomized pseudo-relationship with a prerequisite for consumption (for example, the performer-audience, desired object-buyer, artist-critic, river-land, nature-extractor) when, in reality, relation and its sustainability are where we should begin and end. For the modern music industry, relationality barely exists outside of the "related artist" tab, for ads to be placed in front of us, as long as they're keeping us busy with the nice sounds we seem to like so much. There is no more nature, meaning relation,

in music writ large, outside of the usual controversy and mutual followers. Maybe the issue starts with "writ large" before "music"?

As an *in situ* example of a historical response to the then-budding musical infrastructure we're grappling with today, in 1931 Louis Armstrong cultivated an oft-forgotten baseball team in New Orleans that was nicknamed the Raggedy 9 because of their tattered uniforms. He gave them fresh clothes and called them the Secret 9. Outside of the revitalized jerseys, he also taught many of them how to play in a band and incorporated them into the jazz circuit.[10] This cross-pollination was happening throughout the southern jazz circuit, with Count Basie and Benny Goodman soon following suit. Another feature of this team was that every member was also a member of the now-famous Zulu Social Aid and Pleasure Club, a club of which Armstrong was also considered a member. This example is a short but illuminating understanding of what New Orleanians know as benevolent association. Local benevolent societies were a response to a massive uptick in the mortality rate in Louisiana in the late nineteenth century, with New Orleanians organizing institutions for their own benefit. As noted by Claude F. Jacobs, these societies, rather than the Black hospitals and centres, were the dominant forms of health care, with a mission "to socialize and help each other with illness and death, especially during the recurring epidemics in New Orleans,"[11] covering costs for funerals, second lines, and even procurement of the tomb and plot in many of the city's aboveground cemeteries. Founded in 1844, the Dieu Nous Protège Benevolent and Mutual Aid Association "actively helped slaves purchase their freedom."[12] More recently, these benevolent societies are predominately a cultural preservation project, with many of the social clubs now most prominent during Mardi Gras, although they continue to operate year-round to organize social care.

What Armstrong and jazz performers in that era were doing with opera houses, lounge rooms, and pitching mounds follows the same logic as the marshland does when reacting to sea-level rise through a process known as hysteresis. Hysteresis is a concept some of us feel every day in our homes. Air conditioners use hysteresis: if you set the desired temperature to 71 de-

10 See S. W. Pope, "Decentering 'Race' and (Re)presenting 'Black' Performance in Sport History," in *Deconstructing Sport History: A Postmodern Analysis*, ed. Murray G. Phillips (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 147–77.

11 Claude F. Jacobs, "Benevolent Societies of New Orleans Blacks during the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries," *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 29, no. 1 (1988): 24.

12 Jacobs, 24.

grees Fahrenheit, the air conditioner will never actually stay at 71. It will cool down to 70 degrees and then turn back on once it heats up past 72. Stability is not static but is constant dynamism in response to the world around you. The American South is an embodied tome of almost hysteric hysteresis. To live there is to constantly respond with the dynamism of the earth underneath, where the social and geological often feel like they are emitting from the same source. And such deltaic sociality, discrete but interconnected, can carry neotectonic change.

These are Cubits Gaps to me. In 1862, Cubit's daughters saw the amount of resistance it would take to travel into Bay Rondo, and so they thought beyond a concept they *knew* worked and imagined something that *might* work. It was this imagining that led to the main way geologists fight wetland loss over a century later. Cubits Gap as a historical moment for modern sedimentologists to then engineer sediment diversion might find its analog in jazz's benevolent associations. And this is not to say halftime shows are the goal, but the horizontal intermixing between audience-performer-club member-neighbor could be a useful and wieldy tool to find our own gaps in the infrastructure, which cannot be dismantled on its own terms. Why would it allow itself to be? Hopefully we can produce enough gaps in the infrastructure to start to grow land. In Louisiana, that's only happening in one place. The Atchafalaya Delta, about 135 miles from the mouth of the Mississippi, is building soft wetlands at a rate of one square mile per year. The Atchafalaya Delta, sourced by a river of the same name, is an offshoot of the Mississippi but was given thirty percent of the Mississippi waters for it to claim as its own. Less leveed than its much larger sibling, it has found stability between its own deposition and human induced wetland loss effort previously mentioned above. A square mile a year may not seem like a lot, but for a place where the law of the land is decay, growth is hope. And since nature is one of the few things we can learn from that isn't each other, finding reflection in the world around us might be worth our while. For me, it's here.

MN: *Your articulation of "benevolent associations"—as a particular cultural form that arises in the cultural-geologic specificity of the Lower Delta, but also more generally as a social concept, a practice or a mode of relations that can extend from there—is stunning. It returns me to your work* Care Forgot,[13] *which documents a conviviality that I see as a kind of Cubits Gap, as you*

13 Ryan C. Clarke, *Care Forgot*, visual mixtape, 2019, https://vimeo.com/422880874.

theorize it, in the way that it charts a path toward different forms of being together that seem all too foreclosed in our present moment.

So, I'm curious if you might describe what you see as happening in all that you've assembled in Care Forgot*? What are the "benevolent associations" there, and how are they a kind of Cubits Gap?*

RCC: Watching the film after editing it about five years ago, I see a sort of mathematics at play. A geometry happening. I think there's a resonance going on with what predicates the event that produced Cubits Gap and what predicates the event of a second line or Mardi Gras that might be understood as a reaction to spiritual-historical confinement. Confinement of alternate culture, confinement of alternate life similar to a confinement of riverine systems. These phenomena can be seen as breaks—whether it's in Black life emerging through slavery with the Code Noir, which then brings the ring shout and the drum circle to return, like cosmological stowaways, which then allows the ring shout to straighten out into the procession. Or to reference Cubits Gap—which would initially be determined as a crevasse splay—a bursting out into a new channel, a new sub-delta. Both insist on the recognition and the acknowledgment of the spatial relationship among themselves and the world of various objects around them. Rather than assuming architectural solipsism of the levee and city, these are the architectures of the Earth we are insisting on. New Orleans specifically is a place of paradox, as the city has been built into a casket constructed by levees, it's important to continue to see what ideas emerge from a place that has had a superimposition of life and death upon it for almost a hundred years. And has dealt with Western epistemology longer than the land around it, as it predates the United States as a thought.

Over time, the levee as a gesture of control has begun to signify disillusionment with the Western world for many of us down here. We see the inherent ecological collapse these structures facilitate—this short-term environmental amnesia, as we now have multiple moments in our history of how levees have failed us. Black and lower-class communities especially. St. Bernard Parish in 1927 and the Lower Ninth Ward in 2005 come to mind. And so, when I see things like Carnival, or environmental engagement that is more about being in circulation (across time and space) rather than walling ourselves off from the reality of the locality, I recognize that as an affirmation or reaffirmation of nonhegemonic relations.

What does it mean to engage with something geometrically? It is to acknowledge the spatial relationship among various objects.

From there you begin to develop into self-organization, or self-adaptation. For instance, the way a delta develops is the spontaneous formation of a pattern. A dendritic, tree-like sprawling. But then, that pattern is already adapting to the pattern it's set out as it continues to develop. That's where you get self-organization. Pattern change in a complex system where the pattern is adapting to the very behaviour it created. This is how I'm seeing the development of New Orleans culture (and Black culture, more generally), where you can get Blues to aberrate into jazz, and jazz aberrating into R&B or rap or techno, as it continues to sprawl away from its initial region. Making a way out of no way might be perceived as simply chaotic; I think it's something I might understand as deterministic chaos. We're setting up a culture to find your own voice. Everyone is speaking and doing their own thing, which brings to mind another musical phrase, heterophony. Found in the Black church before it was a traditional jazz concept, before it was the foundation of free jazz. You can hear all three in Albert Ayler's music, for example. Going back to the congregation during hymns, where everyone would solo alongside the choir while the pastor led the tune. You could understand that as a group solo. Black music is, in essence, a continuous group solo. I think that's what all of these "Cubits Gaps" are tending toward. What's your own solo? What's your break?

MN: *These second lines and benevolent associations, this heterophony of the group solo that you describe so wonderfully—I think of them, as you stated it earlier, as a "counterarchitecture." You state it again: "This is the architecture we are proposing."*

I can recall feeling this exact statement in my body in times of uncertain convergence with others. The first example that comes to mind is the 2012 student protests here in Québec, where it felt like—in being out on the streets together throughout the spring and summer—that we were redefining the city, how we interacted with it, how we cohabited it with one another. Those manifestations and actions felt like a proposal for the city that we were enacting each night.

RCC: I think counterarchitecture is often a counterproposition. How can we show you another way to be together? What's another way we can *be* each other *with* each other *for* each other *about* each other? How do we listen to one another?

This is why I really have so much love for the Black music continuum—the music is only possible through listening. We talk so much about improvisation as if it is this pure, exogenic heat release, as if all one is doing is

releasing. Yet there's so much that is about taking in what's around. There's so much circulation, so much relation. It's not simply about spewing what you have to say. You only have something to say because of what you've heard and because of where you're from. If you refuse that, then you've gone mute. You're gonna be stuck.

I love parades insofar as they do rhyme with the strike, the uprising, the protest. They assume and enhance the form of embodied congregated resistance for when it's time to do so. They get your body primed for what it means to be in the streets and to speak up for yourself. I think the tradition of Black music is a sort of technology of a "generative grammar," to reference Chomsky. Black musical structures and societies give you the tools and the parameters to learn how to speak for yourself. Like the twelve-bar blues or general song pattern in jazz of head, verse, chorus, verse, coda. People will say how musicologically rote a lot of jazz or popular blues is, but the magic is in how it prompts one to reach unbelievable degrees of freedom surrounding ornamentation and aberration. What's even more exciting is how you can see this formality in the material and immaterial cultures around Blackness, such as with the New Orleans shotgun homes. The same stakes are at play. In this way, I think New Orleans applies a question to all the inhabitants of the city: Where is yourself in all this chaos, and how can we find each other in this madness? Here lies a city of echolocation.

So, to return to *Care Forgot*, what I really see is an encryption of collective meaning refusing the constraints of linearity, an inscription of a suppressed history of spatiality. Of togetherness, an ontological graffiti culture on a Western cityscape at play that tries to make sense of the questions above.

That's why in the video you get this flow of black-and-white imagery together with more modern-day ones. The sounds are mostly from my own field recordings, sounds that I've collected from my friends, and clips that mean a lot to anyone who has lived in the city for the past twenty years, I'd say. They would send me these voice memos as they walked around the city during Mardi Gras. Listening back, the footage begins to showcase a sense of collective autonomy. I wanted to use the sounds that I was hearing. I don't think of it, necessarily, as "found footage," because there's always in my ear a kind of coloniality in that idea. I "found" it, I "discovered" it. There's something of the romantic and the journey of the individual hero in that idea. When in reality these are shared songs, shared voices, shared notes. I wanted *Care Forgot* to be a document of a series of spatial and temporal relations.

Which is why I'm saying it's mathematics, as that's all that mathematics is: a documentation of a series of relations. What I see in *Care Forgot* is

the closest thing that we can do to modelling after nature, expressing unbounded life. Which is why I'm interested in the idea of Blackness being a sort of geology. The piece is ultimately a moment showing an ongoing series of models of the generative capacity that nature performs and how we can embody that nature to share it between each other.

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