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“The endless roar in which we live”: the figure of noise in nineteenth-century U.S. literature

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“THE ENDLESS ROAR IN WHICH WE LIVE”: THE FIGURE OF NOISE IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY U.S. LITERATURE

by

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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PH.D. THESIS

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This is to certify that the Ph.D. thesis of

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For Ross and Aletta

Ancient life was all silence. In the nineteenth century, with the invention of the machine, Noise was born. Today, Noise triumphs and reigns supreme over the sensibility of men.

Luigi Russolo
"The Art of Noises"

For twenty-five centuries, Western knowledge has tried to look upon the world. It has failed to understand that the world is not for the beholding. It is for the hearing. It is not legible, but audible.

Jacques Attali
Noise: The Political Economy of Music

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ABSTRACT

My dissertation, *The Endless Roar in which We Live: The Figure of Noise in Nineteenth-Century U.S. Fiction* is the first extended study that locates an intersection between sound studies and literary studies in order to examine noise as it defines spaces and places, and the characters that live and work in them, in American literature from the second half of the nineteenth century through the beginning of the twentieth century. I evaluate noise in a sampling of American fiction from Romanticism to Realism and Naturalism, and consider how the imagined sounds of fiction echo nineteenth-century soundscapes and underscore contemporary discernment of noises – and sometimes the lack of noises – in the national consciousness. I consider the street noise that the upper classes wished away, the factory noise that so many women workers spent a lifetime hearing, and the resounding noise of the United States' expansion westward.

Conversely, I also consider how authors and characters respond to the noises that penetrate their ears and create their soundscapes. Together, these considerations shape my argument that sounds help to construct and characterize localities, just as certain places construct particular sounds. Moreover, however, I argue that noise creates spaces wherein identities – such as those of gender, class, and ethnicity – also often tied to place, are discovered, defined, and challenged. In many ways, classifications of noise are subjective and varied, depending on who makes and who hears the noise, where and why the noise is produced, and how and by whom is the noise interpreted. Considering noise as malleable and interpretable based on context allows me to most effectively examine noise as a facilitator of identity formation.

PUBLIC ABSTRACT

As the first extended study of nineteenth-century U.S. literary soundscapes, my dissertation offers a new perspective on noise and perception. Combining methodologies of sound studies and cultural studies, my project reorients how we read the second half of the nineteenth century by turning the gaze on its ear, so to speak. I argue that authors such as Hawthorne, Melville, Phelps, and Norris wrote noise as a powerful figure that would (re)construct the way we consider ethnic and social identities, perceive technological change and progress, and delimit spaces and localities. My project considers the ways in which these authors and their public contemporaries listened to, reacted to, wrote about, and, in some instances, created noise. In doing so, I redirect those current lines of inquiry, which often associate the visual sense with prose and the aural sense with poetry, toward the previously uncharted avenues of cacophonous prose that developed during the Second Industrial Revolution. The authors I examine evaluated and refashioned their sonic environments, suggesting that, just as the array of sounds available to their ears changed significantly during the course of the century, so, too, changed their perceptions of and reactions to those sounds.

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INTRODUCTION

> "NOISE, n. A stench in the ear. Undomesticated music. The chief product and authenticating sign of civilization." – Ambrose Bierce, *The Devil's Dictionary*

The nineteenth century changed how people listened because it also changed what they heard. During the nineteenth century, urban soundscapes underwent drastic transformation under the pressures of economic development. The way some accounts tell it, industrial noise was unleashed on an unsuspecting public, a public which then spent the remainder of the century, and much of the next, scrambling to subdue it. According to John Picker in *Victorian Soundscapes* (2003), silence had become "a commodity of precious value" (42) by the mid-nineteenth century. Those who could afford to purchase it were able to live the kind of quiet lives that medical professionals, like Florence Nightingale, recommended to everyone.[1] Thomas Carlyle's solution to the noise that plagued his work was to construct a quiet place.[2] Costing about 200 pounds, Carlyle paid a hefty price for a silent space. By keeping out the noise of the populace, Carlyle's room marked him as separate, both physically and financially, from the lower echelons outside, who might have been perceived as the perpetrators of the noise, and who would not have been able to reproduce such rooms for themselves. "With new double walls, skylights, and slated roof with muffling air chambers beneath, the room signified what Carlyle referred to as his 'glorious conquest'" (Picker 43). Carlyle seems

[1] Nightingale writes, "Unnecessary noise, then, is the most cruel absence of care which can be inflicted either on sick or well" (47).

[2] Intriguingly, in his journal entry from August 17th, 1853, Carlyle chooses to announce and emphasize his new "SOUNDLESS ROOM!" with punctuation that indicates shouting. While the exclamation point is surely meant to express his emphatic desire for quiet, such punctuation, along with the capitalization of the words, creates a kind of visual noise, which, perhaps, was more acceptable than aural noise to Carlyle.

to imagine himself as a crusader of quiet, waging war against the noises of the city. Significantly, in his eyes (or, ears, as the case may be), he won the battle.

Although Carlyle's actions in response to the noises around him might have been unique, he was far from the only intellectual who thought and wrote amidst an urban din. Stateside, Emily Dickinson lived very near to an industrial complex. "The Hills factory . . . was so close to the house of Emily Dickinson that she would have registered its activity, monitoring it both visually and aurally, many times a day. . . . Pratt suggests that Dickinson regularly . . . heard the whistles that 'sounded six mornings a week at 6:00AM' as well as five other times through-out the day" (Wardrop 99). Dickinson would have also "heard the train whistles four to six times a day, and the banging of trains in the shuttle yard." Was it as severe an annoyance to her as the noise outside Carlyle's study had been to him? Did she wish to procure a new study, "high from all the noise" as Nathaniel Hawthorne had (Woodberry 171)? Was the noise so commonplace that she would have learned to ignore it? Without any record of Dickinson's opinion regarding the factory noise she lived so near, it is difficult to hypothesize exactly how she perceived it. One might hazard a guess, however, that the dashes characteristic of her poetry represent the sustained pitches and pauses of so many factory and locomotive whistles, indicating that noise was not at odds with her work, but infiltrated it.

I evaluate noise in a sampling of nineteenth-century novels and consider how the imagined sounds of fiction echo soundscapes and underscore contemporary discernment of noises – and sometimes the lack of noises – in the national consciousness. I consider the street noise that Carlyle wished away, the factory noise that Dickinson spent a lifetime hearing and, perhaps, contemplating, and the resounding noise of the United

States' expansion westward. Conversely, I also consider how authors and characters respond to the noises that penetrate their ears and create their soundscapes. I engage the possibility that sounds help to construct and characterize localities, just as certain places construct particular sounds. Moreover, I argue that noise creates spaces wherein identities – such as those of gender, class, and ethnicity – also often tied to place, are discovered, defined, and challenged. In many ways, classifications of noise are subjective and varied, depending on who makes and who hears the noise, where and why the noise is produced, and how and by whom the noise is deciphered. Considering noise as malleable and interpretable based on context allows me to more effectively examine noise as a facilitator of identity formation.

The Endless Roar in which We Live locates an intersection between sound studies and literary studies in order to examine noise as it defines spaces and places, and the characters that live and work in them, in American literature from the second half of the nineteenth century through the beginning of the twentieth century. It is, at once, essential and challenging to define what I mean when I use the term "noise." The first definition of "noise" listed in the *Oxford English Dictionary* reads: "Sound; the aggregate of sounds occurring in a particular place or at a particular time; (also) disturbance caused by sounds, discordancy (early use) . . . " ("Noise" 1.a). More than simply "sound," noise is the sum of sounds in a specific place or time. My work underscores the idea that physical and temporal locations are key to an understanding of literary noises, as noise works to define place and time for the reader and for the characters, alike. Perhaps the most significant and provocative part of the *OED* definition of "Noise," however, is the next segment of the definition: "(also) disturbance caused by sounds, discordancy…" This

makes a reader wonder, "*Who* is disturbed? *How* does sound disturb?" These are questions I will consider throughout this study. Further, if a basic property of noise is "discordancy," or "disagreement" (*OED* def. 1), "Is it possible to answer the previous two questions in a way that all (or even most) readers would agree with?"

In his definition of noise in *Acoustic Communication* Barry Traux employs "the generally accepted subjective definition of noise" as "unwanted sound" (86). He writes, "This definition clearly shifts the responsibility for the identification of what is noise to the listener" (86). In *The Endless Roar*, I evaluate noise similarly to Traux, considering it primarily to be the "unwanted sound" that is imposed upon the characters of the texts I examine. I assess the nuances of perception and allow for the possibility that what one character considers to be "noise," another might interpret as the pleasing sounds of "music," "progress," "nationalism," or "commerce." Even so, this idea is problematized when one considers that what the reader "hears" in the mind's ear is, at every turn of the page, directed by the author's or narrator's own perception of the noise described combined with the reader's own perception of the sounds of his or her environment. Thus, to answer my questions above, *who* is disturbed and *how* sound disturbs them changes based on context. Therefore, if noise itself is a kind of aural discordancy, then I posit that labeling a particular sound as "noise" is a discordant process born of the discordancy inherent in noise.

I also borrow from Traux's insistence that not all noise is loud. Traux rightly points out that noise does not necessarily mean "high volume sound." He terms this common misconception, "The noise-equals-loudness syndrome." He notes, "The syndrome is supported by all of the methods devised to measure noise levels and by the

empirical results showing that reported annoyance tends to rise with increases in such levels. Although that correlation may be true, the converse does *not* hold: noise at lower levels is therefore acceptable" (92). Although many of the literary noises I inspect are, indeed, high in described acoustic profile, I consider equally such subdued noises as the ring of a bell and the trickle of a fountain.

Parsing the differences between "sound" at large and "noise," specifically, Traux defines sound "as having a mediating effect on, and therefore as creating relationships between, the individual an the environment. Noise seems to be the source of a negative mediation of such relationships, an alienating force that loosens the contact the listener has with the environment, and an irritant that works against effective communication" (85). At this point, I diverge from Traux's definition of noise. While I agree that it is "an alienating force that loosens the contact the listener has with the environment," my work finds too many exceptions to the rule that described literary noise is always "an irritant that works against effective communication." While this is sometimes the case, I find that, when faced with problematic noises in their environments, characters often find new modes of communication that disrupt, undermine, or otherwise counter the noises of their environments, modes which might not have been exhibited had noise not been present in their lives. Thus, for the purposes of my own definition of noise, I revise Traux's definition to read: Noise is "an irritant that sometimes stimulates alternate modes of communication."

The final part of the *Oxford English Dictionary* definition suggests that "Noise" is a "disturbance made by voices; shouting, outcry…" Here, again, I find myself deviating. While there are, surely, many literary examples of noise defined as "disturbance made by

voices," the texts that I examine tend to explore the mechanical or instrumental production of noise.[3] For the purposes of examining noise in a literary context, it is important to note that, while the mechanical noises carry no linguistic meaning, they do hold great symbolic meaning, and it is to this symbolic meaning that characters respond, often linguistically or, sometimes, musically. Part of the symbolic meaning that can be found in the literature was first evident in those changing mechanical soundscapes that the authors I examine experienced and considered.

The relationship between noise and the proliferation of technology is central to my work in *The Endless Roar*. Indeed, the role of technology has long been fundamental to the development of literary acoustics at large. The locomotive, for example, quickly became a significant part of the nineteenth-century soundscape, and, almost as quickly, its sound was transcribed to the page. Introduced in the United States in the mid-1820s, by the 1830s the railroad became a not-uncommon sight and sound; from the 1850s onward, it was indispensible. For the first time in history, space and time no longer abided by the usual restrictions: land travel became much faster than it had ever been. Geographies that had previously been out of reach were now located within a newly constructed understanding of distance and time. However, people from different parts of the United States found the locomotive to be a shared disturbance of their distinctive soundscapes. A search through nineteenth-century newspapers reveals a shift in public tolerance of noise that seems to correspond with the rise of the railroad system. A newspaper report from Boston in 1847 suggests that "noise is held in great esteem[:] Multitudes of people seem to regard it as splendor, and glory, and beauty, and power, and

[3] One example of vocal noise that my first chapter will briefly consider comes from Nathaniel Hawthorne's "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" (1832).

honor, and riches." However, a report from the *Daily Evening Bulletin* of San Francisco 24 years later notes a drastic shift in perceptions of noise: "The literature of our day . . . is marked by a unanimous revolt against noise. Noise is denounced as an evil thing." This piece seems to be part of a latter-century trend in editorials that call citizens and cities to take action against noise – a presumably futile effort that has continued indefinitely.[4] Being an unmistakable, and conspicuous element in the landscape and soundscape, it is no wonder that some nineteenth century authors spent much time expounding on the locomotive in their literary and personal writing.[5] With how quickly the locomotive changed the nineteenth-century soundscape, I understand it as marking a sort of aural beginning of the nineteenth century.

The phonograph, too, had a profound impact on the writers of the century's latter years, influencing notions of realism as readily as the, perhaps, more often (critically) cited photograph. Edison and others repeatedly highlighted the significance of the phonograph to the idea of realism, a notion that can be fruitfully extended to aurality in literary realism. The phonograph allowed textual sound descriptions a different perspective: No longer was writing the most effective means of recording the voice; no longer was the voice (and later music and sound) inherently ephemeral, reproduced only by the subjective and inadequate adjective.[6] Rather, if recorded, sound could be objectified, preserved, reproduced, and remain unbounded from written language

[4] Even today there are numerous websites and organizations devoted to noise abatement. One such example is Pipedown: The Campaign for Freedom from Piped Music found at www.pipedown.info.

[5] Two such authors discussed in this project are Nathaniel Hawthorne and Frank Norris, who, despite the differences in their approaches and the span of decades between their writings, conceived of the locomotive's noise as, in many ways, detrimental.

[6] Below, I discuss this idea further using Barthe's work.

altogether. For Friedrich Kittler, the phonograph recording was so real that it disrupted the definition of authorship: "Phonography means the death of the author; it stores a mortal voice rather than eternal thoughts and turns of phrase" (Kittler 237).[7] Lisa Gittleman notes that the phonograph was meant to be an answer to the problem of keeping efficient and accurate written records of speech; before the phonograph, "reading texts was the one way to reproduce speech" (61). While people grew accustomed to quick, comparatively effortless travel through the nineteenth century, in 1877 for the first time the voice could also be mobilized in a completely novel way.[8] It could travel independently of its originative body – making the likes of Carwin's extraordinary talents seem ordinary, or, at least, conceivable.[9]

However, the major contradiction of "the talking machine" was that it created a decidedly unnatural distance between bodies and voices at the same time that it faithfully recorded and preserved human speech.[10] Yet, despite all its implications for realism, the noisy crackles and disruptions, alongside the disembodiment of sound that some phonograph listeners could not help but consider, gave phonograph recordings what Ivan Kreilkamp terms a disturbingly "anti-mimetic" quality (223).[11] If the locomotive marks a

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[7] Kittler continues: "Although this loss of the soul's identity with itself had been attributed to the progress of the human race or to the division of labor, it resulted, in the final analysis, simply from the technological impossibility of storing the newly discovered voice in any form except that of writing" (238).

[8] See Erika Brady's *A Spiral Way: How the Phonograph Changed Ethnography* (1999), page 13.

[9] See Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland* (1789).

[10] See John Picker's *Victorian Soundscapes* (2003), page 112.

[11] The technologies of railroad and phonograph converged in the public consciousness in 1878, the year after the phonograph's invention, when the citizens of New York City begged Thomas Edison for quieter trains. Specifically, Edison was asked to develop a noise-dampening system for the city's elevated railway. The assumption was that if he could capture the minutia of sound – such as the footsteps of a fly, as the rumors claimed he could – then he should likewise be able to harness the immensity of the locomotive's noise. Mary Walton ultimately bested Edison in

beginning of the aural nineteenth century, then I offer the proliferation of sound reproduction technologies, which controlled sound and volume in a completely novel way, as marking a kind of end to the era and a heralding of a new one.

Throughout *The Endless Roar*, my concern is not with technology in itself but rather with the noises that technology produces as part of a broader soundscape that was heard, imagined, interpreted, and transcribed by nineteenth century writers. I employ sound studies to understand how authors heard their personal and fictional soundscapes and to help articulate the meaning assigned to the noises therein. Sound studies as a field eludes definition because of its accessibility to a variety of disciplines including history, cultural studies, musicology, communication studies, the social sciences, film studies, and literature. Indeed, within the area of literature alone, the field remains difficult to characterize. Literary scholars engage the aural elements of texts by examining descriptions of musical scenes and objects and descriptions of sound-reproducing or sound-generating technologies. They also consider descriptions of the novel's soundscape, the author's soundscape, voice, or they might listen for the sound of written word when spoken.

In order to articulate how *The Endless Roar* contributes to the field of sound studies and how sound studies can shape the reader's experience of nineteenth-century United States fiction, it is important to conduct a partial survey of the critical history of the field. I believe that the majority of this scholarship can be categorized into at least one

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1881 with her patented track-cradling wooden boxes lined with cotton and sand. To the citizens of New York, however, it didn't seem to matter *who* quieted the tracks; that was beside the point.

of four different areas: soundscape, sound technologies, voice and orality, and music.[12] R. Murray Schafer's *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World* (1977, 1994) marks a sort of beginning of sound studies as a discipline.[13] Schafer argues that in order to understand the world and the environment, and ultimately improve them, people must first listen. Schafer asks, "What is the relationship between man and the sounds of his environment and what happens when those sounds change?" (3-4). Much of the study identifies and defines common features of the typical soundscape, which include keynote sounds, signals, soundmarks, and archetypal sounds. In the last fifteen years, there have been almost no serious studies of soundscape that do not implicitly or explicitly reference Schafer. While most sound scholars recognize Schafer as being highly influential to their own work, I must also acknowledge the limitations of his study: Schafer defines the soundscape, but he fails to offer any interpretations of it. Schafer's observations and definitions, however, are what make *The Soundscape* such a useful interdisciplinary tool, applicable to nearly any field.

My work in *The Endless Roar* also draws upon the methodology employed by Mark M. Smith in *Listening to Nineteenth-Century America* (2001). His study, like Schafer's examines soundscape, but offers a distinctly historical approach. Smith posits

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[12] I intentionally omit "listening" as a category. While some scholars have focused on the listener exclusively (see Melba Cuddy-Kean's "Modernist Soundscapes and the Intelligent Ear: An Approach to Narrative through Auditory Perception" from *A Companion to Narrative Theory* (2005) and Veit Erlmann's *Hearing Cultures: Essays on Sound, Listening and Modernity* (2005)), most often scholars have woven the idea of listening through their work on sound, as it is assumed that if sounds are made and contemplated, somebody is hearing them.

[13] Although Schafer's work is generally regarded as a beginning, I do not mean to imply that he was the first person to study sound. Though the term "sound studies" and the concept of the field did not exist, when, for example, Adorno was writing, we might easily return to these works with an understanding that they are part of a larger project, which would become more recognizable as a field toward the end of the twentieth century. Another scholar who made important contributions on the heels of Schafer's work was Barry Traux with his publication of *Acoustic Communication* in 1984.

hearing, one crucial part of the complete sensory experience, as a way of more fully understanding and interpreting the past. Without an aural consideration of history, he suggests, "we will remain only partially aware of the depth, texture, and nature of sectional identity and deny ourselves access to a fuller explanation of how that identity came into being with such terrible resolve" (7). Similarly, my project claims that without an aural consideration of literature, the reader "will remain only partially aware" of its "depth" and "texture." Smith argues that listening to the sounds of war "allows us to appreciate the complexity of contemporaries' understandings of the conflict" (196). Smith reminds readers that historical sounds are also ephemeral. Therefore, "we must contextualize what was heard and resist the temptation to imagine that sounds past actors heard and listened for are the same as ours" (265). With its focus on literature of the nineteenth century, *The Endless Roar* employs Smith's work as a resource, but also as an example of how to read the aural past. If Smith's work has a shortcoming, it is that he, like Schafer, moves too quickly between ideas, offering his reader a breadth of information, but not always a depth of understanding. My project attempts the opposite. By including only three chapters in my study, I am able to expand and develop each more fully.

As both Mark M. Smith and R. Murray Schafer note, among the many noises that constitute a soundscape, technology often plays a featured role, especially in post-industrial societies. In some sound studies approaches, however, technology takes center stage thanks to the role it has played in shaping how people listen and to what they listen. While these scholars often consider their work as contributory to a broader understanding of the soundscape, they emphasize the histories and significances of sound technologies,

specifically, within that soundscape. From the beginning of her introduction when she defines the word "soundscape," as an "auditory or aural landscape," Emily Thompson's *The Soundscape of Modernity: Architectural Acoustics and the Culture of Listening in America, 1900-1933* (2002) contributes to the preexisting conversations of sound scholars (1).[14] Thompson argues that "Restoring the aural dimension of modernity to our understanding of it" provides a way through which to understand "the role of technology in the construction of culture" (11). Thompson suggests that the adjective "modern" is "characterized by a pervasive engagement with technology." Through her project, which focuses on technological objects as they pertain to architecture and acoustics, Thompson aims to "begin to recover the sounds that have long since melted into air. Along with these sounds," she suggests, "we can recover more fully our past" (12). However, aside from a few backwards glances at the nineteenth century, "our past" for Thompson begins with the start of the twentieth century.

While I value Thompson's work, my own demonstrates that we can "begin to recover" sounds from before 1900 as well. Thompson notes a turn in perception of noise between the beginning of the 20th century and the 1930s. By examining two comic illustrations, she suggests that, while in 1905 noise was perceived as primarily human-made, by 1930 "it was depicted exclusively as the product of modern technology" (150).

[14] Thompson's full note on the term reads: "Schafer defined a soundscape as a sonic environment, a definition that reflected his engagement with the environmental movements of the 1970s and emphasized his ecologically based concern about the 'polluted' nature of the soundscape of that era. While Schafer's work remains socially and intellectually relevant today, the issues that influenced it are not what has motivated my own historical study, and I use the idea of a soundscape somewhat differently. Here, following the work of Alain Corbin, I define the soundscape as an auditory or aural landscape. Like a landscape, a soundscape is simultaneously a physical environment and a way of perceiving that environment; it is both a world and a culture constructed to make sense of that world" (1). My use of the term "soundscape," is aligned with that of Thompson and Corbin.

An examination of literature, however, reveals an earlier timeframe for this shift in thought. For example, the noises found in such Romantic texts as Cooper's *The Pioneers* (1823), Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851), and Poe's "The Tell-tale Heart" (1843) all depict significant sounds as primarily human-made: voice, hand-cranked organ, heart. However, later texts such as Phelps' *The Silent Partner* (1871), Norris's *The Octopus* (1901), and Sinclair's *The Jungle* (1905) convey mechanical noises that seem to exist independently of human intervention; instead, these noises act on and against the characters.[15] Indeed, by the end of the nineteenth century, regionalist writers were already reacting against the type of urban industrial noise depicted in Thompson's 1930's image by figuring noise as primarily a part of the natural environment. Although I do not doubt that Thompson accurately notes a shift in popular aural perceptions in the early decades of the twentieth century, with *The Endless Roar*, I entertain the idea that cultural perceptions of noise may have travelled a much more winding road through history than Thompson imagines.

Shifting from technological noises to human-made sounds, Roland Barthes' "The Grain of the Voice" (1982) emphasizes vocal quality over linguistic meaning. In this well-known essay, Barthes seeks an alternative to the existing modes of discussing vocal music. He observes that vocal music is "invariably translated into the poorest linguistic category: the adjective" (267). Barthes cites the ancient Greeks as exemplative: they perceived each of their modes adjectively and, thereby, shaped our modern perception and language for music. Likewise, the "simple indication of movements" in Italian

[15] There are, of course, exceptions to this rule. Melville's "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids" (1856) seems to predate the prevalence of the idea of technology-dominated noise, just as Chopin's *The Awakening* (1899) is very much concerned with human-made vocal and instrumental sounds.

("*allegro, presto, andante*"), and the later Romantic vernacular indications, employs adjectives as basic descriptions of the musical pheno-text. To struggle against the adjective, to replace an adjective in the mind with a verb before speaking, misses the point. For Barthes, "rather than trying to change directly the language used about music, it would be better to change the musical object itself, as it presents itself to speech: to modify its level of perception or of intellection: to shift the fringe between music and language" (269). Barthes notes a space in which "*a language encounters a voice*." This space, or the sound within that space, is the "grain." Borrowing from Kristeva, Barthes defines the *pheno-song* as the technical aspect of a vocal-musical performance. The geno-song, conversely, reveals the *sound* of language through the articulation of words.

Although Barthes' interest is in music, his essay puzzles over some of the biggest issues in literary sound studies scholarship. The paradox facing all scholars who study sound, except sometimes those who enter the field from a musicology or film studies perspective, is that sound itself, in both the primary historical or literary works that reveal it and the secondary works that contend with it, is mediated through the printed word.[16] Literature, diaries, letters, and magazines don't literally reproduce sound; they describe it. Authors, especially those before the advent of sound reproduction technologies, must have grappled the inadequacies of the adjective in their writing, just as Barthes does in this piece. How can, or how should, a sound be translated to a word on the page? Ultimately, readers are left with the adjective in their mouths and an imagined sound in their heads. In *Scripts, Grooves, and Writing Machines*: *Representing Technology in the*

[16] In addition to Barthes, other scholars have addressed this disparity. Michael Jarret, for example, provides his readers with listening suggestions for each section of "Train Tracks: How the Railroad Rerouted Our Ears" (2001): "*(listen to Ennio Morricone's soundtrack to* Once Upon a Time in the West*, Neil Young's soundtrack to* Dead Man*, and Bjork's 'I've Seen It All')*" (28).

Edison Era (1999), Lisa Gitelman reminds her reader that, before the phonograph, writing was considered the best medium for recording sound. Even in composing *The Endless Roar*, I often felt confined by a lexicon that favors the visual sense over any other. Although I do not intend to arrive at any solution or alternative to Barthe's "poorest linguistic category," indeed I am not certain that there is one, I include a discussion of Barthes here because his ideas are so central to an understanding of the field, and his work has left its mark on mine.

Despite diverse approaches to sound studies, the scholars discussed above are very much in conversation with one another; they build on the ideas and methodologies of those who published before them and demonstrate awareness of their contemporaries' work as well. The literary approach to sound has been no different: it, too, offers significant contributions to the more general field of sound studies. By way of example, I appeal to the work of John Picker, Ivan Kreilkamp, and Philipp Schweighauser. John Picker's *Victorian Soundscapes* (2003) enters the conversation with a historical and cultural analysis of Victorian sound perception. He also includes, however, literary interpretations of Charles Dickens' *Dombey and Son* (1848) and George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* (1876) with an ear toward acoustic technologies, such as the phonograph and telephone, and their possible metaphorical implications. He examines "the close relationship between Victorian sciences and technologies of sound, on the one hand, and literary and cultural representations of sound, voice, and hearing, on the other. This argument works to turn the approach to the Victorian gaze on its ear, by offering an approach that itself turns to and on the ear" (7). Picker's methodology shies away from a sweeping monolithic study of Victorian soundscapes and toward close listening and

examples from individual experiences and motivations. In his reading of Charles Dickens' *Dombey and Son*, Picker moves beyond the realm of the novel's literal sounds and into metaphorical reflections. For example, the train in *Dombey and Son* represents Dickens' "expressive ideal" as a writer. According to Picker, while Dickens struggles to be heard throughout the novel, the train has no such difficulty. Thus, "the train and the language that Dickens uses to describe it threaten to overrun the novel" (28). "The Soundproof Study" takes up an issue that Emily Thompson also spends time considering in the U.S. context. It examines the middle class desire for quiet, particularly quiet streets. At the heart of the problem was street music, which was most frequently performed by lower-class immigrants carrying organs that they "played" by turning a crank. As the Victorian era ended and the new Modern one began, people "who had spent decades struggling to process a new world of sounds took the opportunity to seize upon a new means of sound production," and use it to "drown out the distractions of the itinerants and poor beyond their doors" (111). By the time the gramophone reached the height of its popularity in the 20th century, the recorded voice proved irresistible.

Picker's readings are both compelling and complex. He seamlessly incorporates history, cultural artifacts, and literary close readings. While Picker's methodology offers suggestions to the scholar interested in soundscape, Ivan Kreilkamp's *Voice and the Victorian Storyteller* (2005) offers a literary approach to sound through voice. Kreilkamp's central argument is a challenge to Benjamin's notion of the storyteller, which has receded "into the archaic" (Kreilkamp quoting Benjamin, 2). For Benjamin, voice is something we are in the process of losing, or, perhaps, have already lost. Kreilkamp argues that the voice is in no danger, but developed and continues through

fiction. Kreilkamp suggests further that vocal cultures did not die out with print cultures, but were enhanced by them. It was not until the Victorian period, he posits, that a disjunction between print and voice began. It is this emerging disjunction and the disappearance of the storyteller that *Voice and the Victorian Storyteller* seeks to trace: "The figure of the storyteller emerged as a symptom of and an attempt at a solution for this perception of cultural crisis" (7). Kreilkamp insists that it is time to rethink the notion of literary writing as a suppressed or silenced voice. The Victorian novel is unique because it first presents the death of the storyteller, or the speaker, as resurrected through the written word. Each chapter of the book explores a particular aspect of Victorian vocal culture, demonstrating its scope and heterogeneity, and examines the relationships among print, writing, voice, and orality. While my work has been greatly influenced by the ideas that Schafer, Smith, Thompson, and Barthes pose, I am indebted to the methodological approach that Picker and Kreilkamp utilize. Before delving into sonic metaphors in a text, both of these scholars first coax literary sound out of the realm of the imaginary by considering it with an ear toward contemporaneous sound reproduction technology and the cultural soundscape. However, Picker and Kreilkamp both examine British literature. The field of sound studies lacks many extended explorations of the sounds of literature of the United States, a deficiency that I hope to help rectify through this project.

Philipp Schweighauser's book is one of very few such studies. He continues the conversation about soundscape and literature through a distinctly American lens in *The Noises of American Literature, 1890-1985: Toward a History of Literary Acoustics* (2006). His hope for the book is to chart the history of noise evaluation through American literature "from the naturalist to the postmodern period" (3). Schweighauser's objective is

to "historicize the question of the social function of literature" by addressing "the convergences between the noises literature represents and the noises it produces" (26). To this end, he examines the naturalist, modernist, and postmodernist movements. Schweighauser's work is valuable to the field because there are few pieces of scholarship of this length that specifically examine noise and literature – fewer, still, that examine noise and American literature. Further, his choice of examining specific novels for each section allows him to go into an in-depth analysis of each, while he emphasizes the cultural realities within which each novel is set, and the relationship each novel has to other works of its period. Schweighauser's introduction and conclusion point to his knowledge in the field of sound theory, as well as his interest in contributing to it.

Although I value Schweighauser's work on noise and American literary acoustics, and have found it to be the only model available for writing about American fiction and noise, his time frame (1890 through 1985), like Thompson's, does not account for the full scope of curiosity and anxiety about changing soundscapes that, I contend, begins earlier – namely, in the nineteenth century. Literary scholarship thus far has failed to consider that noise and nineteenth-century listening practices have played any significant role in the development of fiction in the United States. Thus, in part, my project aims to expand the timeline of literary acoustics – to consider how U.S. writers have heard, interpreted, imagined, and written sound and silence – beginning from an earlier moment, when popular conceptions of the meaning of noise were developing and changing.

Through the idea of noise, I ultimately offer a new reading of literary history that is sensitive not only to time period but also to place and identity. I engage with this subject through three primary categories of literary noise production: the

"undomesticated music" of the street and commerce, the noise of industry and labor, and the "imperial" noise of colonialism, which extends into the 21st century. Examining these sound categories helps me to understand how noise functions in a variety of literary contexts, and thereby enables me to make a larger claim about its significance in American literary history. A consideration of location, literary/historical period, and textual sonic engagement is necessary for a thorough understanding of how the authors of the primary texts I examine imagine noise and for what purposes.

Drawing upon Jacques Attali's definition of music as "the organization of noise," my first chapter, "'But listen!': Noise and Nation in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables*," examines Nathaniel Hawthorne's descriptions of public music making in *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851), which, I suggest, represent the author's sense of an evolving national consciousness; his use of noise and silence critiques popular ideals of national homogeneity. Alongside these considerations, the novel's "leitmotif," so to speak, is the idea of confinement, which Hawthorne introduces and develops through different instruments at different moments: the marching band, the shop bell, the harpsichord, and the barrel organ. Indeed, while Phoebe's character imparts an individual, "natural tunefulness," the political wind band procession that Clifford hears from his window ledge creates only indecipherable sounds, conveyed through the voice of the narrator as so much noise to the reader's ear. Hepzibah's bell, which controls her movements, signifies her family's fall from its former socio-economic status. The sound of the Italian boy's barrel organ marks him as "foreign" to listeners in the novel. I suggest that the Italian boy and his barrel organ are part of a larger national discourse on immigration and immigrant noise-making. The chapter discusses the subtext surrounding

the Italian boy scenes that a nineteenth-century reader might have understood better than a twenty-first century reader would. In each instance, Hawthorne complicates the reader's commonly held distinctions between noise and music and explores each character's relationship to freedom and confinement, and, in certain instances, removal. I suggest that the silenced Indian land deed signers, who mark a distinct aural contrast to Hawthorne's previous noisy and ghostly Native characters of, for example, "Young Goodman Brown" (1835), reflect the reality of U.S. imperial projects as realized by Indian Removal. The chapter concludes with a coda that examines Ambrose Bierce's definition of "Noise" in his *Devil's Dictionary* as "undomesticated music," alongside his story "Hades in Trouble" (1888). My analysis demonstrates that the distinctions between music and noise continued to be fluid in the nineteenth century, even decades after the publication of *The House of the Seven Gables*, and that the barrel organ, which carried much signifying weight throughout the century, contributed to the ambiguity.

My second chapter, "'The music of industry and enterprize': Herman Melville, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, and the Noise of the Factory," is concerned with the sounds and silences associated with industry, primarily located in the eastern United States. I engage this topic through the notion that noise affects human health, comfort, and productivity, an idea that garnered much attention during the nineteenth century. More specifically, this chapter explores how female factory workers are situated in the politics and culture of industrial noise and of noise reform. In this chapter, I examine Herman Melville's "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids" (1856) and Elizabeth Stuart Phelps's *The Silent Partner* (1871). Each of these texts aurally locates the factory and deals with the problem of its noise in different ways. In "The Tartarus of Maids,"

Melville poises high-volume machinery in direct opposition to silent women workers. Phelps's characters do not remain silent, but challenge the machine noise with the music of their own voices. However, in both texts, the noises of factory machines prove profoundly destructive as they work to silence, in both literal and metaphorical ways, the novel's female characters. The machines and their noise represent the patriarchal factory system at large, on which the women workers are dependent for their livelihood, but in which they are severely exploited. Echoing the methodology established by Picker and Kreilkamp, the chapter considers contemporaneous popular accounts of factory noise alongside the literary accounts in the hopes of bringing the texts' noises out of the realm of the imaginary and metaphorical, and into the reader's ear with a higher fidelity. Central to my work with each text is a consideration of how the women workers respond to the noises to which they are subjected. In Melville's diptych, I consider the implications and meanings of silence, while I argue that, in Phelps's novel, music serves dually as an antidote to noise and a catalyst for change.

Chapter three, "'A vague not of terror': Frank Norris and the Sound of Imperialism," relocates noise from the eastern United States to the west. Considering Frederick Jackson Turner's "Frontier Thesis" and the closing of the American frontier, this chapter examines Murray Schafer's idea of sound imperialism, alongside Frank Norris's *The Octopus* (1901). In this chapter, I turn to the final part of Ambrose Bierce's definition of noise, "The chief product and authenticating sign of civilization," an idea which both Norris and Bierce engage with irony. Specifically, I consider how noise itself becomes a "chief product" (always in the name of supposed civilization and progress) in *The Octopus*. Norris includes moments of subtle sound, too, however. Though pleasing to

the ear, I read these sounds, also, as imperial due to the history from which they emanate. Through his use of aural descriptions on the ranch, in the mission garden, and in the city, Norris develops an acoustic theory of space and time that challenges the visual conception of American progress and presents a counterpoint to the image of the locomotive and its tracks as an octopus with its tentacles. U.S. imperial strategy, Norris suggests, is most accurately represented sonically – radiating, permeating, reverberating – rather than visually. Through the novel's central character, Norris ultimately offers an interpretive guide for the reader: as Presley strains his ears to listen for his epic poem, so, too, should the reader listen attentively to the Epic of Wheat. The chapter concludes with a view of twenty-first century California through Helena Maria Viramontes' *Their Dogs Came with Them* (2007). By including a discussion of this novel, I posit that the issues at stake for Norris' characters are still highly relevant and unresolved in the present-day.

The Endless Roar aims not to subdue, control, or glorify noise. Instead, I have sought to understand how nineteenth century literature figures noise as influencing, determining, and reconstructing ethnic and social identities, historical and technological change, and geographic and spatial location. Combining literary studies and sound studies, my dissertation examines noise in nineteenth-century literature and culture and argues that it was central to the way some authors conceived of national agendas and social/cultural identities. Just as nineteenth-century newsprint was peppered with descriptions, complaints, and praises of noise, the authors I consider engaged ardently with their varied acoustic environments and subsequently constructed noises in their fiction as symbols of conflicted national identity, arguably misguided progress, and imperial strategy. Silence, the essential counterpoint to noise whether described or

implied, demonstrates the effects of high-volume sound on characters like Catty in *The Silent Partner* and genres like Naturalism. Far from the simplistic one-sided views of noise that their contemporaries tended to expound in newsprint, the authors I examine complicated cacophony and quietude by writing each as nuanced and dynamic.

Deviating from the traditional sound studies literary scholarship that tends to favor music, poetry, and twentieth-century fiction, my dissertation listens to nineteenth century literary soundscapes in order to offer a new perspective on noise and perception. By focusing on specific moments in literature that portray noise, and character responses to noise, I hope to bring attention to an under-examined, but significant, element of U.S. literary studies. It is no coincidence that noise is figured differently in U.S. literature before the phonograph than it is after, just as it is no coincidence that noise is figured differently in urban, industrialized areas than it is in rural areas, or in the eastern United States than in the southwestern. In many ways, noise defines culture, place, and even individual identity. Indeed, many of the writers that I examine demonstrated their awareness of the world's sonority, and their own place in it, through their personal and professional nonfiction writing as well as their literary works. I cannot help but consider noise to be as much a part of the cultural contexts of the literature I examine, as it is a part of the text itself. Ultimately, through this project, I hope to make sense of what J. H. Girdner, M.D. in the *North American Review* (1896) termed "the endless roar in which we live."

CHAPTER 1

"BUT, LISTEN!": NOISE AND NATION IN NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE'S *THE HOUSE OF THE SEVEN GABLES*

And now how narrow, scanty, and meager, is this record of observation, compared with the immensity that was to be observed. […] When we see how little we can express, it is a wonder that any man ever takes up a pen a second time.

Nathaniel Hawthorne, *Notebooks*

What Hawthorne Heard

In the summer of 1844, Hawthorne wandered out of his home in search of a quiet spot in the woods to observe and write. Through the course of the late morning, his eye fell upon the Indian corn, foliage, paths, "bits of dry twigs," pebbles, shadows, and sunshine that comprise Sleepy Hollow Cemetery in Concord. He concluded that, "Were we to sit here all day, a week, a month, and doubtless a lifetime, objects would thus still be presenting themselves as new, though there would seem to be no reason why we should not have detected them at all at the first moment" (*Reflection* 99). Although each of Hawthorne's observations heretofore has been visual, his language in this transitional sentence is sensory neutral: he *detects* objects.

As if realizing in the act of writing that he might employ other sensory organs besides the eyes in his process of "detection," the writer subsequently shifts to descriptions that are predominantly aural:

> "Now a cat-bird is mewing at no great distance. . . . Now, in this stillness is heard the long, melancholy note of a bird, complaining alone, of some wrong or sorrow. . . . And now, all of a sudden, we hear the sharp, shrill chirrup of a red squirrel, angry, it seems. . . . Now we hear the striking of the village-clock, distant, but yet so near that each stroke is distinctly impressed upon the air."

Finally, Hawthorne works up to what is, perhaps, the most recognizable of all his sound descriptions, thanks to the work of Leo Marx. "But, hark! there is the whistle of the locomotive – the long shriek, harsh above all other harshness, for the space of a mile cannot mollify it into harmony. . . . and no wonder that it gives such a startling shriek, since it brings the noisy world into the midst of our slumbrous peace" (Hawthorne *Reflections* 100). Having experienced the sonic contact of the "noisy world" at large and "our" peaceful one, the author must take a moment to recover his thoughts from "this interruption."

Through the course of this journal entry, Hawthorne explores the idea of a changing world, a world whose alterations are best understood through sound. Distinguishing between the more subdued, immediate ("now"), fleeting timbres of nature and the prolonged, earsplitting resonances of machinery, Hawthorne notes a collision of two sonic spheres. The woodsy clearing of Sleepy Hollow in 1844 seems caught between a natural, archaic world and modern worlds, a rift that Hawthorne attempts to navigate through his journal entry. I begin my project with the middle of the nineteenth century because of its place in sonic history. At mid-century, the nation's soundscape was in the

midst of extreme alteration, influencing the way authors such as Hawthorne experience, consider, and write sound.

After perusing Hawthorne's journal, it may come as a surprise that a search for scholarly commentary on Hawthorne and sound leaves the seeker empty-handed. Instead, literary scholarship has been far more devoted to explorations of Hawthorne and visual studies. While some early scholars, such as Van Wyck Brooks (1958) and Henry James (1879) were prone to note Hawthorne's lack of talent and discernment where visual art was concerned, others have been more dedicated to challenging such claims. In *Prophetic Pictures: Nathaniel Hawthorne's Knowledge and Uses of the Visual Arts* (1991), Rita Gollin and John Idol use Hawthorne's notebooks and biography to establish his rich and lasting relationship to the visual arts, a relationship that, the authors claim, he deliberately and diligently cultivated despite his apparent lack of natural ability. Regarding Hawthorne's education in the visual arts, Gollin and Idol write, "Steadily though often unsurely, Hawthorne climbed a ladder of taste, one ranging from realistic representations of the mundane and secular to allegorical depictions of the sacred and divine" (4). It was a challenging learning process for Hawthorne, and his eye did not always find favor with the most worthy and popular styles. "Despite the prevailing assumption that the Italian idealists were at the top of the ladder, Hawthorne preferred realistic representation that nonetheless suggested spirituality. . . . Using both 'eyes' Hawthorne meant to climb the ladder as far as he could to meditate on the creative links between writing and painting and sculpting (4)". Hawthorne's eye was not discerning in the way that popular artistic tastes would dictate, and yet, his cultivation thereof surely aided him in noticing,

contemplating, and valuing visually commonplace items as the shadows, "bits of dry twigs," and pebbles in Sleepy Hollow.

In *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851), the most notable curse upon the Pyncheon family is the one uttered by Matthew Maule, "God will give him blood to drink," which is believed to be manifested in the form of a series of multi-generational Pyncheon deaths characterized by the sound of blood gurgling in the throat. However, Hawthorne seems to have written a second curse into the novel, one perceived more broadly in the Pyncheon family: that of confinement, which, one might imagine, Matthew Maule's son, the carpenter who built the House of the Seven Gables, effected. Just as the Pyncheons who died by old Maule's curse of blood conspicuously perished within the walls of the house, members of the family who were otherwise personally unaffected by the curse seem to be unwilling or unable to leave the house, until the last of the Pyncheons who resemble the old Colonel dies at the end of the novel. Although Pheobe's family line has escaped the confines of the Seven Gables, she is a special case, different from her relations.[17] The other Pyncheon of the story's present that has lived beyond the walls of the house is Clifford, yet his life outside the House of the Seven Gables was wrongful imprisonment for a murder he did not commit. Thus, though he may have escaped the house during those years, he was never free. It is my contention that Hawthorne develops this theme of confinement most significantly through the novel's sonic details, especially with the noises of the marching band, Hepzibah's shop bell, Alice's harpsichord, and the Italian boy's barrel organ, each of which in its own way straddles the line that distinguishes music from noise. Through various dissonances,

[17] As Holgrave remarks, "forgive me, Phoebe; but I cannot think of you as one of them" (185).

Hawthorne explores his own definitions of noise and music that illuminate the tension between the characters' nuanced relationships to freedom and confinement. Related to these themes, the noises of the novel offer striking and, perhaps, unexpected insights into Hawthorne's relationship with the nation and provide glimpses of a developing national consciousness.

As a way of discussing Hawthorne's use of sonorous descriptions, I offer the term "acoustic realism." Although this phrase has been used in the past to describe the high fidelity of sound recording and reproduction, I use it to describe the very detailed and realistic sound descriptions that Hawthorne incorporates into his journal writing and his fiction. As Fredrick Kittler reminds his readers, storing the voice "in any form except that of writing" was a "technological impossibility" (238) prior to Edison's phonograph. Johnathan Sterne's *The Audible Past* (2003) takes an inverse approach to conceptualizing the history of sound technologies than most other narratives. Rather than relying on the idea of sound-reproduction technologies as instigative of changes in human listening, Sterne suggests that the inventions of such technologies as the phonograph and telephone can be traced through prior shifts in cultural processes and paradigms. For example, technologies did not impact the kinds of things people thought about; rather, beliefs, such as the idea that sound recording presents the voice of the departed, "were wishes that people grafted onto sound-reproduction technologies – wishes that became programs for innovation and use" (8). Under this view, Hawthorne's sense of acoustic realism is, perhaps, one of many examples of written sonic fidelity that would lead to Edison's invention of the phonograph. Significantly for my purposes, however, Hawthorne is not content to stop with a faithfully recreated sonic description that contributes to that exists

merely to supplement the reader's ability to imagine the scene. Rather, his specific kind of literary acoustic realism takes a distinctly literary approach in its commitment to meaningful contribution to the reader's interpretation of the novel. Otherwise ordinary and "realistic" sounds, such as the tick of a clock, the caw of a crow, the ring of a bell, the noise of a wind band procession, or the music of a barrel organ, carry the extraordinary weight of signification.

In many ways, Hawthorne's want of talent regarding the visual arts echoed his lack of aptitude for music. Legend, as perpetuated by Julian Hawthorne, has it that Nathaniel Hawthorne's ear for music was sorely inept. In fact, Julian writes that his father had an "insensibility to music – he was wont to declare that he never could distinguish between 'Hail Columbia' and 'Yankee Doodle'" (Julian Hawthorne v. 1 103), a feat that even a child without any musical training should be able to accomplish, and a man whose mother sang in the East Church choir as a young woman certainly should.[18] Although Hawthorne polished his eye at art museums, however, he does not seem to have fine-tuned his ear in any parallel concert halls. Rather, his study of sound seems to have occurred in more mundane places. Just as Hawthorne's eye gravitated toward realism in art, his ear seems to have been pitched toward realism in sound, a preference he demonstrates and develops repeatedly through (and perhaps for) his writing. In August of 1842, Hawthorne wrote about his ramblings through the forest:

> A company of crows . . . felt themselves injured or insulted by my presence; for, with one consent, they began to caw-caw-caw – and

[18] See Brenda Wineapple's *Hawthorne: A Life* for reference to Betsy's participation in the church choir. I think it is safe to assume that a young Hawthorne likely would have been exposed to music in some form through her.

> launching themselves sullenly on the air, took flight to some securer solitude… There was no other sound, except the song of the crickets, which is but an audible stillness; for though it be very loud, and heard afar, yet the mind does not take note of it as a sound, so entirely does it mingle and lose its individuality among the other characteristics of coming Autumn. (80)

Although Hawthorne seems to have little ability where music is concerned (a point to which I will return), his sound descriptions suggest that he maintained a striking sensitivity to his soundscape and was committed to creating acoustic realism in his writing. Never in his journals is the author satisfied to describe sound as a mere method of recording an event. Instead, he describes sound and meditates on its meaning and value (a technique that he employs in the journal entry from Sleepy Hollow Cemetery as well). In the passage above, Hawthorne begins with a description of the crows. Refusing to be content with a mere sketch of the scene, Hawthorne fancies himself privy to their collective thoughts; the birds must have been "injured or insulted by my presence" based on the raucous clamor they make as they take flight. Again, and with even more care, Hawthorne ruminates on the sound of crickets, whose singing what it means for the listener. Describing cricket song as "but an audible stillness," which, "the mind does not take note of […] as a sound," Hawthorne's writing captures in realistic terms the tranquil mood of the afternoon and he demonstrates that his ear is, indeed, capable of discernment in his very awareness of the presence of crickets, which he identifies as the mark of seasonal change. The author knows that the sound facilitates his perception of the stillness. In another instance, Hawthorne writes on July 27, 1844: " . . . for we hear at a

distance, mowers whetting their scythes; but these sounds of labor, when at a proper remoteness, do but increase the quiet of one who lies at his ease, all in a mist of his own musings" (100). In this instance, the distant sounds of labor allow Hawthorne to appreciate, by contrast, both the "quiet" around him, and his own leisure time.

The care with which Hawthorne describes and considers sound in his journal translates easily to his fiction, suggesting that the author did not practice listening to his environment merely for his own pleasure, but also to enhance his art. For example, the technique Hawthorne demonstrates with the crickets finds a parallel in *The House of the Seven Gables*. The narrator portrays the scene of Judge Pyncheon's death near the end of the novel:

> Is there no other sound? One other, and a fearful one. It is the ticking of the Judge's watch, which, ever since Hepzibah left the room in search of Clifford, he has been holding in his hand. Be the cause what it may, this little, quiet, never-ceasing throb of Time's pulse, repeating its small strokes with such busy regularity, in Judge Pyncheon's motionless hand, has an effect of terror, which we do not find in any other accompaniment of the scene. (277)

Hawthorne understands that a listener can best become aware of pervading silence only through a particular kind of sound, the sort of noise that amplifies silence, making the imperceptible "audible." The ticking of a clock or watch is another of those noises, like the crickets of Hawthorne's journal, which "the mind does not take note of . . . as a sound." It becomes so commonplace amidst the regular activity within a room that the ear does not hear it, even when physically capable. Yet, when the room is still, the ticking,

which functions in the same way for the author as the cricket song, becomes an "audible stillness," the means through which the listener realizes that she is enveloped in quiet. Hawthorne utilizes the acoustic realism practiced in his journal. Here, too, commonplace sounds are described and considered. Although the circumstances of the Judge's death may call to the reader's mind the decidedly unrealistic family curse, the sounds associated with the scene of his death are representative of Hawthorne's literary acoustic realism, at once mundane and meaningful.

Sophia Hawthorne believed her husband's ear for the spoken and written word was second to none, as she explains in a letter: "'The House of the Seven Gables' was finished yesterday. Mr. Hawthorne read me the close last evening. . . . I only wish you could have heard the Poet sing his own song, as I did; but yet the book needs no adventitious aid, - it makes its own music, for I read it all over again to myself yesterday, except the last three chapters" (Julian Hawthorne v. 1 383). For Sophia, not only is Hawthorne's speaking voice comparable to a poet who sings "his own song," but also the words themselves are musically inflected in a way that reaches beyond the vocalizations of a speaker, and she discerns a sense of the poetic in his prose. Sadly, as Brenda Wineapple notes in her biography, "One college acquaintance recalled that Nathaniel's 'timidity prevented him from appearing well as a recitation Scholar'" (51). Thus, it seems, students of Hawthorne's life should not take his proclamations of his own musical insensibilities at face value, for he seems to have had a keen sense of musicality for the spoken word.

The author's notebooks reveal that his ear was finely tuned to the resonances of soundscape, music, and voice around him, even if he was allegedly unable to distinguish

between melodies. While intermittently working on a translation of "Lenore" and drowsing over Voltaire's *Candide*, Hawthorne writes that he was also "occasionally refreshing myself with a tune from Mr. Thoreau's musical-box, which he had left in my keeping" (92). That Hawthorne finds the music box "refreshing" indicates that music holds some kind of emotional meaning for him. Further, that Thoreau left it in his keeping suggests not only the close relationship between the two friends, but also Thoreau's acknowledgment of Hawthorne's enjoyment of the light, delicate tunes of the musical-box.

Likewise, Hawthorne's notebook describes a young girl who, "In the evening . . . sits singing by the hour together, with the musical part of the establishment. . . . The last thing you hear of her, she is tripping up stairs, to bed, talking lightsomely or singing" (57). It is difficult to tell exactly what Hawthorne thinks of the girl as he considers her at once to be an example of "perfect maiden modesty" with a "sunniness of temper and smartness of disposition" and a specimen of "ordinary" intellect who "never says anything worth hearing, or even laughing at, in itself" (57-8). It is clear, however, that the author finds her to be a worthwhile character study and likes her, for the most part. It might even be argued that this girl was a real-life inspiration for Phoebe in *The House of the Seven Gables*, who is described in similar terms: "Whatever she did, too, was done without conscious effort, and with frequent outbreaks of song which were exceedingly pleasant to the ear. This natural tunefulness made Phoebe seem like a bird in a shadowy tree . . . . It betokened the cheeriness of an active temperament, finding joy in its activity, and therefore rendering it beautiful" (Hawthorne *House* 77). Perhaps because Hawthorne's ear is far more frequently tuned to his natural environment than to music,

the music box and the singing girl descriptions become all the more significant. They demonstrate the kind of music that Hawthorne found pleasurable and noteworthy. Hawthorne seems to have preferred "light" music: low in volume, restrained, with simple instrumentation and harmony. There is a sort of innocence or modesty (in its lack of complexity and intrusiveness) associated with the music that would emanate from a music box or from a young girl's throat. With these instances in mind, Julian's declaration that his father "never could distinguish between 'Yankee Doodle' and 'Hail Columbia'" (Julian Hawthorne v. 1 103) seems absurd. If any melodies should have been recognizable (and distinguishable) to the American ear of Hawthorne's day, it might have been these. Julian Hawthorne supposes that this lack of melodic discernment is the reason his father was never able to produce good poetry himself, despite his admiration of it. "If he had anything important to say," writes Julian in contrast to his mother's praise of the author's work and oration, "it must be said, not sung."

Thus, how should we interpret the discrepancy between Julian's account of Hawthorne's aural faculties and Sophia's report? As an American consulate in Liverpool, he writes about a woman who had been "stopping occasionally to sing songs under the windows; and last evening, between nine and ten o'clock, she came and sang 'Kathleen O'Moore' richly and sweetly" (Hawthorne *English Note-books* 341). He seems to have had no trouble identifying this tune. Hawthorne's aural sensitivity for recitation, soundscape, and light melodies seems impeccable, yet he struggles to distinguish between "Yankee Doodle" and "Hail Columbia." That Hawthorne's ear seems to be selectively sensitive to nuances of pitch and style, and the meanings held therein, suggests that there is more at stake than a mere inability to distinguish between certain

patriotic tunes. Hawthorne's birth "on the Fourth of July, 1804, in Salem, [while] cannons roared and bells rang," might lead us to expect that Hawthorne, of all people, would have a special proclivity toward patriotic music.[19] During Hawthorne's lifetime, one popular mid-century bandmaster, Patrick Sarsfield Gilmore, was known to have concluded his concerts with "the patriotic familiarity of Hail Columbia to avoid anticlimax" (Crawford 289). Hawthorne likely would have heard military wind bands in concert or on parade perform these songs, and, in their repetition of such performances, the melodies would have epitomized the nation in its development. "Hail Columbia" was, after all, considered the unofficial national anthem, and, by 1864, became "a musical symbol of the Union cause" (289). Hawthorne, however, did not always find himself committed to what others in Concord would have seen as "the Unions cause." For example, in *From Battlefields Rising: How the Civil War Transformed American Literature*, Randall Fuller writes that Hawthorne was troubled by the responses he heard to John Brown. "Brown's actions, he felt, begged questions of morality that were too easily obscured by the transcendentalists' lofty rhetoric. How could the man's admirable vision of slavery's wrongs ever justify his murderous actions? . . . How could responsible thinkers so blithely excuse these consequences?" (40). I would argue, then, that the distinction that matters to Hawthorne is not between one patriotic melody and another, but rather between the music of the individual and the music of the (national) collective.

Julian suggests that his father could never have been a poet because "the lilt and jingle of measured feet and rhymes were not reconcilable, to his mind, with the sobriety of honest utterance" (Julian Hawthorne 104). Hawthorne confirmed that he was not one

[19] Margaret B. Moore offers this sonic version of Hawthorne's birth in *The Salem World of Nathaniel Hawthorne* (1998).

for writing "jingles" and "rhymes" himself. Fuller notes that Hawthorne wrote a letter to Julian, explaining that, when he took a steamer to Fort Monroe during the Civil War, he had passed "the frigate Congress, and the three masts of the Frigate Cumberland, sticking out of the water, with a tattered bit of the American flag fluttering from the top of one of them" (Hawthorne quoted in Fuller 44). Hawthorne recalled that the frigate "refused to surrender to the Merrimac, and went down with the old flags still flying, and firing her last gun at the enemy after her decks were partly under water. A braver thing was never done; and I only wish I could write a song about it" (44). Hawthorne wishes to write a song, but he does not do so. "Jingle" and "rhyme" would not have "reconciled" to his mind in this instance, any more than they did when he heard "Hail Columbia." Instead of a song, Hawthorne composes "Chiefly about War-Matters," which Fuller describes as "one of the most scathing accounts ever written about the war" (45). Thus, while the Irish ballad of love and loss might have registered in Hawthorne's ear, "Yankee Doddle" and "Hail Columbia," with their sober lyrics about war, liberty, and unity, were different. These songs were central to the national consciousness of the day, creating, as anthems do, a sense of unanimity and collective participation in a national ideal epitomized in words and melody. The trouble for Hawthorne was that his "national ideal" was different from his acquaintances', making any participation in anthemic gestures of collectivity seem incongruous to him.

Through his inability to hear these melodies clearly, Hawthorne challenges what Lauren Berlant terms the National Symbolic, a defiance that further points to his authorial objective of refashioning the nation through its fiction. Berlant refers to Hawthorne's efforts to "reconfigure what it means to be an American citizen" as a "'genealogy' of

national identity, from 1640 to 1850" (16). She suggests that that "we see suspended meanings of the national 'map' through characters whose experiences vary because of their own gender, class, ethnic, racial, religious, and political identification" (17). Contesting the extant America characterized by its history, language, and laws as well as its music, Hawthorne creates a new understanding of national identity through fiction that examines the local and the individual.[20]

This reorientation of nation through fiction seems to find a correlation in the distinction Hawthorne makes between the sounds of the people and their environments and the songs of the nation. In *Who Sings the Nation-State?* (2007), Judith Butler suggests that "to produce the nation that serves as the basis for the nation-state, that nation must be purified of its heterogeneity except in those cases where a certain pluralism allows for the reproduction of homogeneity on another basis. This is, needless to say, not a reason to favor pluralism, but, rather, a reason to be suspicious of any and all forms of national homogeneity, however internally qualified they may be" (32). Hawthorne, through his fiction and, most strikingly, through his ear, demonstrates his own suspicion of "national homogeneity" and his desire to move away from imagined uniformity and toward the nuances of the local and the individual.

[20] Here I am working with Lauren Berlant's definition of "America" as "an assumed relation, an explication of ongoing collective practices, and also an occasion for exploring what it means that national subjects already share not just a history, or a political allegiance, but a set of forms and the affect that makes these forms meaningful. As his prefaces repeatedly stage it, 'we' – that is, the author, Hawthorne, and the readers who consume his fictions – are already inextricably bound together by America, prior to joining in the novel's process. We are bound together because we inhabit the *political* space of the nation, which is not merely juridical, territorial (*jus soli*), genetic (*jus sanguinis*), linguistic, or experiential, but some tangled cluster of these. I call this space the 'National Symbolic'" (4-5).

"A most infrequent uproar"

In *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, Jacques Attali defines music as "the organization of noise" (4). Conversely, the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines "noise" in terms of music, as "any of various kinds of music characterized by use of dissonance or inharmonious noise" (1b). The obfuscation between noise and music in *The House of the Seven Gables* is, perhaps, most apparent for the reader when "a political procession, with hundreds of flaunting banners, and drums, fifes, clarions, and cymbals, reverberating between the rows of buildings marched all through town, and trailed its length of trampling footsteps, and most infrequent uproar, past the ordinarily quiet House of the Seven Gables" (165). In the same vein as the Attali and *OED* definitions, Hawthorne's writing all but erases the line of distinction between music and noise. Significantly, this site of erasure occurs in the public street as a political parade's marching band, a visual and aural representation of "national homogeneity," passes through.

Band music in the United States has a long military history, as evidenced by the traditional high school or college marching band uniform still in use today. The first known American military band appeared in 1756 in a parade before a militia regiment whose commander was none other than Benjamin Franklin. The following year, Britain would send regimental troops to America, including military bands, as Richard Hansen points out, in order to "counter American disenchantment in serving British militia" (203). In 1792, all able-bodied white men were required by law to join a state militia, and each battalion was required to have its own (usually civilian) band.[21] The bands' primary purposes were to prepare out-door concerts and to participate in military drills, patriotic

[21] See Richard Crawford's. *America's Musical Life: A History*.

and civic ceremonies, and parades.[22] In 1798, the United States Marine Band was established under a congressional act signed by President John Adams. The band consisted of thirty-two drums and fifes, one drum major, and one fife major (Battisti 7). Indeed, prior to the Federal era, the majority of instrumental music performed in colonial America, as Richard Hansen points out, was primarily dance music played by solo flute, violin, or fife (Hansen 205).

However, new methods for making brass instruments were developing during the early years of the United States, which allowed for greater versatility, ease, and volume of playing, while listening became a different kind experience, often geared toward the pleasure of an audience. Whereas in 1806, two years after Hawthorne's birth, the Salem Massachusetts Brigade Band included "five clarinets, two bassoons, one trumpet, and one bass clarinet," 1815 found Federal Era bands larger, "including fuller keyed woodwinds, keyed bugles, serpents, bass horns, ophicleides [keyed brass instruments], and double reeds" (Hansen 211, 213). This change in instrumentation was largely due to Dubliner Joseph Halliday's discovery in 1810 that, by cutting holes into a bugle and adding keys, the instrument could play any note in the scale. Within a few years, brass instrument makers everywhere began applying and improving Halliday's method (Crawford 273-4). By the 1820s, brass instruments had developed to the point that they could play melodies, and play them at high volumes that were better suited to outdoor venues. By the 1830s, a new family of instruments was introduced to the typical brass ensemble: percussion, which included the triangle, tambourine, cymbals, and bass drum. At mid-century, "the

[22] See, Frank L. Battisti's *The Winds of Change: The Evolution of the Contemporary American Wind Band/Ensemble and Its Conductor*.

brass band had become the typical American wind ensemble" (Crawford 274). While bands would be very much a part of Civil War military practice, they were also performing with increasing frequency in non-military settings, for entertainment purposes. Listeners tended to find band music thrilling, and urban concerts, at which bands pleased crowds with popular favorites, were well attended. Because of their military heritage, band concerts often featured patriotic songs and popularized such tunes as "The Star-Spangled Banner" as well as Hawthorne's "Yankee Doodle" and "Hail Columbia."

In part, the popularization of these patriotic melodies likely stemmed from the unifying process of collective performance and audition. As Charles Fairchild suggests, "The social connections people create through sounds and the ways in which some people invest their social beings in a seemingly simple act – playing music for other people in public – can occasionally take on a shade of the profound" (19). The idea of nation offers similar implications for unification of the people. Benedict Anderson posits that the nation is "imagined as a *community*, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings" (7). That the music they heard was patriotic presumably helped to doubly reinforce audience members' connection to one another as both listeners and compatriots.

Familiar with these songs by name if not by melody, we might assume that Hawthorne attended (or, at least, found himself within earshot) of these concerts and was,

thereby, aware of the developments that bands had undergone during his lifetime. He would have witnessed the increase in volume, the adaptability to outdoor spaces, and the addition of new percussive instruments. He also would have known the national significance of the tunes he claimed not to recognize. During Hawthorne's time at Bowdoin from 1821 to 1825, the college had a musical society. Although his friend, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, took part as a flautist, Hawthorne, notably, did not.[23] Yet through these years in particular, the American musical climate was changing dramatically, and Hawthorne's more musically inclined friends likely had an inkling of it. Although readers of the notebooks might not guess it, Hawthorne's fiction demonstrates that he was well acquainted with wind bands and their parades. That the American wind band in Hawthorne's time became more capable of making music outdoors, and that the instruments themselves were undergoing development, seems to be reflected in his fictional bands, which – in both *The House of the Seven Gables* and "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" – are completely uninhibited, taking to the streets to release their unbridled cacophony. Yet Hawthorne remains distinctly aloof. In his life, he seemed to have developed none of the "social connections" people of his day generated by experiencing wind band patriotism. In his writing, such wind bands, though explicitly connected to politics, create indecipherable sounds, written to be construed as noise in the reader's ear.

From Clifford's upper window vantage point, the parade participants in *The House of the Seven Gables* lose their individuality and become "one great life – one collected body of mankind, with a vast, homogeneous spirit animating it" (166). Unlike Hawthorne or Clifford, the parade and its band have achieved Butler's "we," and they

[23] See Horatio Bridge's *Personal Recollections of Nathaniel Hawthorne*, page 50.

have established "social connections" and become "one collected body," in part through their sound. When faced with such a mighty sound from such a mighty body, which unabashedly breaks the stillness of the "ordinarily quiet House of the Seven Gables," Clifford cannot help but be moved – both emotionally and physically. As much an outsider as Hawthorne was standing before his "company of crows," Clifford, too, can only imagine a perspective from within the mass. Significantly, it is not the sight of the human tide that wrenches Clifford toward it, but the sound, which, once "audible to him," he cannot resist.

The narrator continues,

> At last, with tremulous limbs, he started up, set his foot on the window-sill, and, in an instant more, would have been in the unguarded balcony. As it was, the whole procession might have seen him, a wild, haggard figure, his gray locks floating in the wind that waved their banners; a lonely being, estranged from his race, but now feeling himself man again, by virtue of the irrepressible instinct that possessed him. Had Clifford attained the balcony, he would probably have leaped into the street […] towards the great centre of humanity. (166)

Through Clifford, then, the reader might imagine Hawthorne toeing the line between the local and the national. In describing the procession, the narrator reveals, "The spectator feels it to be fool's play, when he can distinguish the tedious common-place of each man's visage, with the perspiration and weary self-importance on it, and the very cut of his pantaloons, and the stiffness or laxity of his shirt-collar, and the dust on the back of his coat" (165). Berlant notes Hawthorne's propensity to experiment "with citizenship,

with the abstract political affiliations nations require, and with the different forms of fantasy that circulate through the local experience of the national context" (Berlant 16). While Berlant considers this effort to take place over the course of an entire novel, *The Scarlet Letter* specifically, I believe a less-extended version becomes apparent in this scene. The narrator describes how unromantic it is to distinguish "each man's visage." In relating such mundane occurrences as sweat, tailoring, and dust, which distinguish each member of the procession as an individual, the narrator illustrates precisely "the local experience" that defines Hawthorne's fiction. The narrator continues: "In order to become majestic, it should be viewed from some vantage-point, as it rolls its slow and long array through the centre of a wide plain […] for then, by its remoteness, it melts all the petty personalities, of which it is made up, into one broad mass of existence – one great life – one collected body of mankind, with a vast, homogeneous spirit animating it" (165). In this second half of the description, we find that the scene is best appreciated from a removed distance, as a greater whole. In other words, the "local experience" should, by the narrator's standards, be viewed as part of a larger, "national context." The passive spectator, according to the narrator, prefers grandiosity to simplicity, a "homogeneous spirit" to an individual mind. The narrator, having observed the scene up close, seems prepared to remain at the more removed vantage point.

Clifford's preferences, however, move in the opposite direction. His initial view of the scene is from an upper-story window. He sees and hears the parade as "one broad mass of existence," but finds himself compelled to change his view. To take a plunge into its center would mean seeing the collective as individuals, and becoming one of them. In this way, Clifford's desires seem to reflect the author's tendencies in his fiction of

understanding the nation "through the images, narratives, monuments, and sites that circulate through personal/collective consciousness" (Berlant 5). Although Berlant does not specifically include "sounds" in her list, I adjudge such an inclusion to be implied. Considering this idea further reveals another kind of connection between author and character. That the political band procession creates a "most infrequent uproar," as opposed to the soul stirring tunes of patriotism we might expect, evokes Hawthorne's inability to distinguish between two of the most popular patriotic melodies of his day.

If music is, as Attali posits, "the organization of noise," then for Hawthorne, national identity maintains elements of disarray; it is still being deciphered and discovered. Berlant writes, "Citizenship becomes equivalent to life itself and also looms as a kind of death penalty: both activity in and exile from the political public sphere feel like cruel and unusual punishment. . . . Thus the complexity of Hawthorne's tone: the pain and pleasure of his citizenship and the sublime jocularity of his exile" (4). This statement could be describing Clifford's mind as he stands before the balcony. Clifford believes the leap "would have made me another man!" With the dive, he would have left his life of confinement and inaction, becoming instead a citizen, an active member of the national body politic. For Clifford, the noise and movement below is "equivalent to life itself." Yet the plunge would have meant literal death and accusations of suicide. Subsequently Clifford's desire to be a member of the political parade "also looms as a kind of death penalty." Although Clifford does not, as yet, feel the nation as community, it is clear that he is capable of imagining the possibility of a "deep horizontal comradeship" so strong that he might be compelled "not so much to kill [which he did not do], as willingly to die for such limited imaginings [which he is on the brink of

doing]" (Anderson 7). When Clifford sets his "foot on the window-sill" (166), the reader discovers that the complexity Berlant hears in Hawthorne's written tone seems to find a sympathetic resonance in the novel.

"Such a hateful Clamor!": Clifford, Hepzibah, and the (Dis)cords of Commerce

By describing Clifford as "not quite in his sound senses" from her earliest meeting with him, Phoebe cues the reader to the importance of Clifford's relationship to sound. When Phoebe says he is "not quite in his sound senses," she refers to Clifford's mental state, but her word choices for describing his mind bear significance. If Clifford were in his proper "senses," then his sensory preferences would be comparable to the tastes of other people such as Phoebe and her acquaintances. Thus, we can read the word "sense" as having a double meaning – at once "mental state" and "physical sense." Further, Phoebe uses the phrase "sound senses," where a word like "proper" or "right" or "good" might just as easily have been used for "sound." Although Clifford's palate is known to be distinctly sensitive, and his disposition is known to be uniquely "mild and quiet" and "childlike," it seems to be his sense of hearing in particular that most significantly sets him apart from others in the novel.

Through Clifford's ear, the reader understands that the "childlike" man is as much mentally confined to the past as he is physically contained inside the house. Just prior to the band parade scene, the narrator meditates on the noises that catch Clifford's ear. "All the antique fashions of the street were dear to him; even such as were characterized by a rudeness that would naturally have annoyed his fastidious senses. He loved the old

rumbling and jolting carts. . . . The butcher's cart, with the harsh music of its bells, had a pleasant effect on Clifford, because, as few things else did, it jingled the very dissonance of yore" (161). Clifford's attraction to dissonance comes as a revelation after Phoebe's apt description of him as a "quiet" man. As readers, we might expect Clifford to prefer quiet along with his solitude. Yet, the sounds that his contemporaries, represented in this case by the narrator, find "harsh," "annoying," and "dissonant," have a rare and "pleasant effect on Clifford." Clifford's attraction to particular noises is far from haphazard, however. Rather, he favors those specific discords that he associates with the past, those that ring "the very dissonance of yore." Through noise, specifically, Clifford is able to connect to a past that he longs for, but hardly remembers and cannot regain.

Again, the narrator's literary acoustic realism enforces this idea though a noise description of a scissor-grinder's wheel:

> Children came running with their mothers' scissors, or the carving-knife, or the paternal razor, or anything else that lacked an edge, (except, indeed, poor Clifford's wits,) that the grinder might apply the article to his magic wheel, and give it back as good as new. Round went the busily revolving machinery, kept in motion by the scissor-grinder's foot, and wore away the hard steel against the hard stone, whence issued an intense and spiteful prolongation of a hiss, as fierce as those emitted by Satan and his compeers in Pandemonium, though squeezed into smaller compass. It was an ugly, little, venomous serpent of a noise, as ever did petty violence to human ears. But Clifford listened with rapturous delight. The sound, however, disagreeable, had very brisk life in it, and, together with the

> circle of curious children, watching the revolutions of the wheel, appeared to give him a more vivid sense of active, bustling, and sunshiny existence, than he had attained in almost any other way. Nevertheless, its charm lay chiefly in the past; for the scissor-grinder's wheel had hissed in his childish ears. (161-2)

The narrator makes it clear initially that the scissor-grinder is no cure for Clifford's mental state, though it can fix anything else with a dull edge. Yet in making this distinction, the narrator also necessitates a comparison between Clifford's mind and the steel edges of the knives, scissors, and razors. In a novel that repeatedly invokes the Garden of Eden, it is interesting to find a reference to Pandemonium (Milton's word for Hell) here, in this representation of the mundane.[24] Throughout the novel, Judge Pyncheon is the clear representation of Satan in the little flawed Eden that is the Pyncheon garden. The Judge, like Milton's Satan, is a master at spinning lies in beautiful and convincing fashion, his tongue comparable to a piece of "busily revolving machinery." Although Judge Pyncheon's true character is suspected by nearly everyone he meets, the text does not reveal him to be devious with any certainty until the end of the novel when he is described in his youth: "He had shown himself wild, dissipated, addicted to low pleasures, little short of ruffianly in his propensities, and recklessly expensive, with no other resources than the bounty of his uncle. . . . Now, it is averred . .

[24] A few examples of Edenic references in the novel are: "The early sunshine – as fresh as that which peeped into Eve's bower, while she and Adam sat at breakfast there – came twinkling through the branches of the pear-tree, and fell quite across the table" (101); "It was the Eden of a thunder-smitten Adam, who had fled for refuge thither out of the same dreary and perilous wilderness, into which the original Adam was expelled" (150); "They were conscious of nothing sad nor old. They transfigured the earth, and made it Eden again, and themselves the first two dwellers in it" (308); "And so the flower of Eden has bloomed, likewise, in this old, darksome house, to-day!" (310).

. that the young man was tempted by the devil, one night to search his uncle's private drawers . . . While thus criminally occupied, he was startled by the opening of the chamber-door" (313). This scheme, which ultimately leads to Old Jaffrey's death and Clifford's wrongful imprisonment for murder insinuates a certain likeness between young Jaffrey and Satan. Beyond Judge Jaffrey Pyncheon's conniving to remove Clifford from the flawed Eden that is the House of the Seven Gables, he conjures the demonic as well in his physical appearance, as suggested by his first encounter with Clifford in the novel's present: "It was not pity that restrained him; for, at the first sound of the enfeebled voice, a red fire kindled in his eyes; and he made a quick pace forward, with something inexpressibly fierce and grim, darkening forth . . . " (129). His smile, thereafter, "rendered his aspect not the less, but more frightful, that it seemed not to express wrath or hatred, but a certain hot fellness of purpose, which annihilated everything but itself" (130). Such words and phrases as "red fire kindled in his eyes," "fierce and grim, darkening," "frightful," and "annihilated," paint an unmistakably demonic picture of Judge Pyncheon. After such descriptions, it is no wonder that Clifford's mind was eventually dulled by the grinder's wheel of Judge Pyncheon's deception. Over time, the Judge "wore away the hard steel," which the reader might imagine was Clifford's intellect prior to the novel's present, far beyond a state of optimal sharpness, to the extent that, according to the narrator's observations, it can never be given back "as good as new."

Despite the correlations that the reader might make between Clifford/Judge and edge/grinder, there is also an apparent contradiction in this passage. Clifford listens to the machine with "rapturous delight." The reader might question whether this makes him

diabolical, along with the Judge, or otherwise content to be a product of the Judge's scheming or, perhaps, so simple minded that he cannot tell the difference between pleasant and annoying sounds. An alternative reading, however, might suggest that Clifford's love of his pre-imprisonment past, which the sound also represents for him, outweighs his fear of the Judge. Such an idea is unexpected considering the first encounter between Clifford and the Judge. After all, upon hearing the Judge's voice within the house, Clifford cries to his sister, "go down on your knees to him! Kiss his feet! Entreat him not to come in! Oh, let him have mercy on me! Mercy! – mercy!" (129). One might imagine such frantic words coming from the mouth of one pleading for his soul before a dark supernatural power, his voice "broken and miserable." Although Clifford cowers before the Judge in person, he metaphorically ignores his cousin's existence in the scissor-grinder scene by refusing to interpret the grinder's noise as a representation of Judge Pyncheon as, I believe, the narrator intends for readers to construe it. Consequently, the moment that Clifford chooses to hear what he loves, rather than what he hates, prefigures the end of the novel when the Judge dies, and Clifford ultimately regains his agency and restores the "edge" he presumably had before his imprisonment. The only kind of freedom Clifford can experience at this point in the novel is borne out of the scissor grinder's racket. Unlike the perceived noise of the mass parade in the street, the scissor grinder, for Hawthorne, epitomizes the local sonic experience that, so crucially, comprises the national whole. Clifford alone, though his mental edge is compromised, recognizes the beauty that Hawthorne seems to find in his local soundscape.

The only noise that Clifford cannot seem to tolerate, and which is the bane of Hepzibah's existence as well, is that of the shop bell. For Hepzibah, the bell represents her economic fall and the end of her prosperous family line. Each time it rings, it heralds the moment when public street and private house become one space as people move fluidly between one and the other. Readers discover through the noise of the bell that, like Clifford, Hepzibah lacks freedom. She is emotionally tethered to the house and unwilling to expose herself to the ridicule of the town, but she is, more specifically and tightly, bound to the house through the shop and its bell. Hawthorne seems to extend the metaphor by describing her physical responses to the bell. Her nerves act out "in responsive and tumultuous vibration" when she hears it. Likewise, her "heart seemed to be attached to the same steel-spring; for it went through a series of sharp jerks, in unison to the sound" (49). It is as though Hepzibah is a puppet and the strings that move her arms, legs, and heart, even, are attached to the bell. Although she was never sent to prison for a crime she did not commit, she is no less captive than Clifford. When she first opens her shop, she unbars the door, "letting the bar fall, with what smote upon her excited nerves as a most astounding clatter. Then – as if the only barrier betwixt herself and the world had been thrown down, and a flood of evil consequences would come tumbling through the gap – she fled to the inner parlor, threw herself into the ancestral elbow-chair, and wept" (41). Hepzibah's upper-class sensibilities remain intact, though her pocketbook reveals her poverty. Unlike Clifford, she does not despise her containment within the house, but welcomes it. While he wants to dive into life outside the house, she wants to hide from it. The strings that tether Hepzibah to the shop bell, fortified by her poverty, are ultimately and permanently severed by Judge Pyncheon's death and bequest.

Thus, Hepzibah, like Clifford finally gains her freedom, and she is able to leave the house.

Beyond aurally representing economic failure, however, the bell signals Hepzibah's disengagement with the community which is, perhaps in Hawthorne's estimation, her real failure. The first time the bell is rung, Hepzibah "was suddenly startled by the tinkling alarum – high, sharp, and irregular of a little bell […]. Its ugly and spiteful little din […] at once set every nerve of her body in responsive and tumultuous vibration. The crisis was upon her!" (42). Shortly hereafter, the narrator reveals the extent of Hepzibah's crisis. "Any ordinary customer, indeed, would have turned his back, and fled. And yet there was nothing fierce in Hepzibah's poor old heart; nor had she, at the moment, a single bitter thought against the world at large, or one individual man or woman. She wished them all well, but she wished, too, that she herself were done with them, and in her quiet grave" (43). In Hepzibah, therefore, Hawthorne writes his antithesis. Whereas Hawthorne's purpose as an author seems to be to examine the "individual man or woman," the sounds and images which comprise "the world at large," Hepzibah would rather welcome her grave than involve herself in such an analysis. Hawthorne appropriately selects the bell as the aural emblem of Hepzibah's position. When compared alongside the acoustic profile of the marching band or the scissor grinder's wheel, the bell seems hardly audible. To Hepzibah's ear, however, the bell is a "sharp," "tumultuous" "din." The bell, then, as heard by the reader through Hepzibah's ears, parallels her seeming contradiction to her author's motives.

"So dead a silence": On Makeshift Coffins and Ghostly Harmonies

If patriotism and the idea of a homogenous nation has heretofore been represented as (musical) noise, indicating, for Hawthorne, a disruption of the imagined national ideal, silence plays an equally significant role in the narrative of *The House of the Seven Gables*. Schafer writes, "Man fears the absence of sound as he fears the absence of life. As the ultimate silence is death, it achieves its highest dignity in the memorial service" (256). In the novel, described silence is most often associated with death, but it also seems to indicate an absence of the "social connections people create through sounds" (Fairchild 19). Silence in *The House of the Seven Gables*, then, does not merely describe an absence of sound, but also an absence of community, that "deep, horizontal comradeship" that Benedict Anderson uses to describe the nation.

Perhaps the most recognizable of these moments comes when Phoebe approaches the house after her visit, not knowing that Judge Pyncheon sits dead within. As the narrator relates, "she knocked. A reverberation came from the emptiness within. She knocked again, and a third time, and, listening intently, fancied that the floor creaked, as if Hepzibah were coming, with her ordinary tiptoe movement, to admit her. But so *dead a silence* ensued upon this imaginary sound, that she began to question whether she might not have mistaken the house, familiar as she thought herself with its exterior" (298, emphasis added). She considers further, once Holgrave reveals himself, "how unaccountably silent and impenetrable the house had become" (299). The silence is so complete that the narrator, sympathetic to Phoebe's thoughts in this moment, directly equates death with silence. So thorough is the lack of sound that Phoebe begins to doubt her eyes and even her memory in favor of her ears, with which she finds herself

"listening intently." Holgrave, too, notes a connection between silence and death when he describes his morning to Phoebe: "no stir nor footstep about the house. This morning, there was the same *deathlike quiet*" (304, emphasis added). Although Judge Pyncheon's death is at the heart of the silence that Phoebe and Holgrave experience, his body never receives the silent adjective; rather it is the silence that the narrator describes in deathly terms. In this moment, the silent House becomes a makeshift coffin for Judge Pyncheon, and, for what might be the first time in his history, Jaffrey Pyncheon is contained.

This theme of death defining silence is revisited throughout the novel when the narrator describes Alice Pyncheon's harpsichord: "It looked more like a coffin than anything else; and, indeed – having not been played upon, or opened, for years – there must have been a vast deal of dead music in it, stifled for want of air" (74). In a striking parallel to Judge Pyncheon's situation, the now silent harpsichord serves as a coffin for Alice's dead music. The instrument is a visual representation of death in its similarity to the shape and constitution of a coffin, but it is also an aural representation of death in its silence. Contained within are hundreds of suffocated melodies that once moved easily from wooden box to free air. Later in the novel, Clifford sits down to play the harpsichord while Hepzibah listens in. "Nor was it less marvelous, that the long silent instrument should be capable of so much melody. Hepzibah involuntarily thought of the ghostly harmonies, preclusive of death in the family, which were attributed to the legendary Alice. But it was, perhaps, proof of the agency of other than spiritual fingers, that after a few touches, the chords seemed to snap asunder with their own vibrations, and the music ceased" (225). When human (or spiritual) hands try to coax music out of it, the

harpsichord rebels with snapping strings, ensuring that such an event can never take place again. The instrument is once more characterized by silence where music should be.

The deaths of Jaffrey Pyncheon and Alice Pyncheon are distinct from the kind of death that Benedict Anderson describes. Whereas, for Anderson, nationalism is associated with "this fraternity that makes it possible . . . for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings" (19), Jaffrey and Alice's deaths lack such a cause. Rather, they are each ensnared in the family curse, reminding readers of Hawthorne's prefatory warning, "namely, that the wrong-doing of one generation lives into the successive ones, and, divesting itself of every temporary advantage, becomes a pure and uncontrollable mischief" (2). Instead of the "deep, horizontal comradeship" with their fellow citizens that Anderson describes, Jaffrey and Alice belong to a shallow, vertical community through ancestors, joined together by "wrong-doing" and "uncontrollable mischief." Their allegiance, unknowing and, in Alice's case, unwilling as it might be, was thrust upon them by their forefathers. As a man concerned with noises of the individual and the mundane as a way of exploring how the expansive nation is made up of localities, Hawthorne seems to understand silence in the novel as working in opposition to both the national (in its lack of community) and the local (in its connection to the death of the individual).

Schafer writes, "Man likes to make sounds to remind himself that he is not alone" (256). We might imagine that Clifford's harpsichord playing is an attempt at this very thing – an effort to defy his solitude and connect with a time and lineage that came before him. At the moment that the strings break, however, the harpsichord becomes a kind of coffin, entombing Alice and the other Pyncheon ancestors, and instigating Alice's

subsequent ghostly performances. The noise of the breaking strings echoes the jarring shift in the Pyncheon line from past to present, from bourgeois to merchant class. Likewise the breaking strings serve as a preamble to the breaking of the family curse that will free Clifford and Hepzibah from the confines of the house.

Dark Alien Countenances and Silent Hieroglyphics

In his article, David Anthony offers an insightful analysis of the Italian boy and, more significantly, his monkey as Hawthorne's way of writing class as a "racial issue." Anthony reads the monkey's role in the novel as "a thinly veiled caricature of a performative black masculinity" (254). Yet Anthony's focus on the monkey does not allow for a thorough consideration of the Italian boy himself. Not only does the boy represent class and racial difference in the novel, but he also serves, in his capacity as "foreign other," as a part of Hawthorne's version of the national narrative. Although the narrator does not describe the Italian boy in detail when he first appears, the second time he enters the narrative, the boy is paid greater attention. Aside from being named "the Italian boy," or simply "the Italian" in the text, the child is further marked as different from the novel's central characters when the narrator notes, "Phoebe's smile had talked a kind of heart's language to the foreigner," and in another instance the boy is distinguished from "a shrewd little Yankee" (294). Again, the narrator describes the boy as being a "foreign vagabond" with a "dark, alien countenance [that] would soon be brightened by Phoebe's sunny aspect," as though the swarthy youth might be physically altered and, implicitly, improved through Phoebe's proximity (295, 294). Finally, when

two men approach him to tell him the news of Judge Pyncheon's death, one calls to him, "I say, you young French fellow! . . . come away from that door-step, and go somewhere else with your nonsense! The Pyncheon family live there; and they are in great trouble, just about this time. They don't feel musical to-day. . . . So be off with you at once!" (295). As far as the gentlemen on the street are concerned, it is their responsibility to the Pyncheon family, and their community at large, to enforce assumed, if not official, noise regulations. Yet the implication of their actions goes beyond a mere respect for the local soundscape. By naming the boy, "young French fellow," the men on the street seem to suggest that there exists a sense of interchangeability among those perceived as "foreign" to the United States, which is implicitly tied up with the boy's noise production. If the Italian boy's monkey represents "a thinly veiled caricature of a performative black masculinity," the boy himself seems to offer a more opaquely veiled embodiment of the nation's ambivalence over the deeply enmeshed issues of noise and ethnic identity. That the boy is asked to leave the public space near the Pyncheon house has only partly to do with his "popular tunes."

The gentlemen on the street likely had a much more convoluted reasoning behind their sentiment toward the boy and his instrument than mere goodwill toward their Pyncheon neighbors. A critical look at musical tastes offers some significant implications regarding the general national disdain for barrel organs and their grinders. Bethany Bryson's study found that "negative attitudes toward social groups result in negative attitudes toward the types of music associated with that group" (895). Although Bryson's research is founded in late twentieth-century American musical tastes and cultural demarcations, nineteenth-century periodicals and literature depicting American street

music seems to cohere with her findings. Thus, the reader can imagine that part of the cultural distaste for barrel organ music stemmed, in fact, from prevalent antipathies toward the immigrants who played them. Indeed, as Mark M. Smith notes, "more ethnically diverse populations, by virtue of the different sounds created by different tongues and accents as well as cultural styles, can sound more discordant than more homogenous populations" (121). From this perspective, it seems that nineteenth-century urban ears might have understood the sound of barrel organs to be increasing the volume of an already deafening cacophony. Readers of *The House of the Seven Gables*, are made to "hear" another layer of discord in the novel through the Italian boy. Not only does his instrument register among the other significant, dissonant sounds of the novel, but also his very presence signifies that he is already entangled in a larger network of perceived immigrant noise. Thus, when the gentlemen on the street outside the Pyncheon house ask the boy to leave, they cite his music ("nonsense") as his primary offense, yet it seems likely that his interchangeably foreign accent and "dark, alien countenance" are also probable, if unstated, grounds for dismissal.

Considering this, subsequently, the boy's visual representation is as significant to the gentlemen's reaction as is his aural representation. Because the living conditions of Italian child street performers were not widely known until the 1870s, Hawthorne could not have had a complete understanding of the lives of the young street performers he encountered and wrote about. He would, however, have had some understanding of the children's situations based on his own observations. It would have been clear to him that the young performers were dirty, hungry, poorly clothed, and (with regard to the organ

grinders, at least) untrained. In a notebook entry from December 1st, 1853, Hawthorne writes from England about street musicians and musicians performing on a boat:

> They were a very shabby set, and must have made a very scanty living at best. Sometimes it was a boy with an accordion and his sister, a smart little girl, with a timbrel, - which, being so shattered that she could not play on it, she used only to collect halfpence in. Ballad-singers, or rather chanters or croakers, are often to be met with in the streets, but hand-organ players are not more frequent than in our cities. I still observe little girls and other children barelegged and barefooted on the wet sidewalks. (469)

Hawthorne seems to suggest that, at least in his U.S. experience, child street musicians and singers were not as common as organ grinders. For this reason, Hawthorne might have decided to write the Italian boy as an organ grinder, rather than a harpist, violinist, or ballad singer. Although Hawthorne does not describe the boy's physical appearance in any great detail, he must have had an image similar to that of the "shabby set" of "children barelegged and barefooted on the wet sidewalks" in mind when he developed the character of the child organ grinder in *The House of the Seven Gables*. Although the narrator describes the encounter between the gentlemen and the Italian boy as though the former are upholding middle class standards of funereal noise reduction by dismissing the boy, they note, speaking of the house by which they stand, that "the Pyncheon family live there." That they evoke the family name and join it with the image of the house suggests that they see a wide discrepancy between the boy's appearance and the family's. His appearance as foreign, "French," and his "shabby" attire visually mark the boy as an unworthy occupant of the public space outside the House of the Seven Gables.

In order to fully understand what the gentlemen saw and heard with regard to the Italian boy, some contextualization is necessary. When Hawthorne wrote *The House of the Seven Gables*, child street musicians were a prominent feature of city streets, despite the fact that, by the 1830s in London, complaints against street organ music were commonplace.[25] In *Little Slaves of the Harp* (1992), John Zucchi speculates that the barrel organ "at one time. . . probably did dispense lovely melodies" and that its grinder would have been "a truly quaint sight on the streets of London, with their animals and street organs" (40). A significant shift occurred, however, when children entered the scene: "the trade degenerated into commerce. Most of the children knew little about musical technique. . . . 'Their performances are as a rule very crude.'" There was no shortage of newsprint devoted to the street music "problem." However, prior to the late-1860s and, especially, the 1870s, U.S. newspapers and magazines rarely covered child street musicians. According to Zucchi, most of the information available to us concerning child street musicians comes from A.E. Cerqua, the first teacher at the Italian School in New York City. The school directed much of its attention to child street musicians, believing that the children would only ever become useful citizens if they were kept off the streets and educated. Although it is impossible to know how many child street musicians there were in any given place (primarily because they moved so frequently from city to city, often unaccompanied by adults), the records of the Italian School provide a sense of the trend. In the school's first year, nearly the entire student body (fifty students) performed music in the street. In the 1840s, it was not uncommon for European organ grinders to travel to New York in search of new ears to perform for, just as they

[25] See John Zucchi, *The Little Slaves of the Harp: Italian Child Street Musicians in Nineteenth-Century Paris, London, and New York* (1992).

might have travelled to London or Paris before. Their living conditions were generally the same on both sides of the Atlantic. As Cerqua reported, the organ grinders lived "like beasts! as many as ten besides monkeys, lived in one room about ten feet by twelve" (quoted in Zucchi 113). Several years later, the street musician tally was down to only fifteen to twenty students.

By 1860, nine years after *The House of the Seven Gables* was published, Cerqua reported that there were considerably fewer children making music on the streets. Cerqua writes, "The vile traffic of hireling children is also almost extinct… while in former years a boy was invariably attached to an organ-grinder, now never, or very seldom is one seen in that trade. A girl may be seen now and then, but generally the grinder travels alone. Of the boys, many are learning trades, the most favourite of which with them is the jewelers" (quoted in Zucchi 113). A few years later, in the mid-1860s, the Italian School documented that there were no longer any child street organists in attendance, a tally that seems to reflect their gradual disappearance from the New York streets as well.

In 1872, the *New York Times* reported in detail on the living conditions and relationship between street musicians and their "masters," the padroni. Children organ grinders had places they could retreat to, such as the Italian School, whereas other Italian child musicians (violinists, harpists, etc.) did not.[26] These children also were less likely to exchange their street musicianship for other trades such as boot blacking, soap and match peddling, or flour barrel rolling at the docks. The *New York Times* articles outline the

[26] My speculation is that because the unskilled organ grinder children, specifically, were targeted by the school, they had a better chance of learning a more substantial trade. Although Zucchi does not say, it seems as though the school may have intentionally not targeted the musicians because their trade was looked upon as one of skill.

state of the typical child street musician's life in the 1870s, but we can imagine that prior to the Italian School (or even in its early years), and in the larger cities that did not have such a school, living conditions and cultures might have been very similar. Before the 1870s, padroni (the men for whom the Italian children worked) had relatively free reign. The *Times* reported that the situation was "as absolute a slave-trade as ever existed down South, and … in its details infinitely more repulsive" (quoted in Zucchi 116). One six-year-old told a reporter, between bites of "semi-petrified beef bone," which he brought for lunch, that his mother sold him to his master for sixty ducats. He did not know what his own name was, and he had to bring home eighty cents each day to avoid a beating. He and his fellow musicians were allowed to bathe once a month and never removed their clothes between baths. They were given a piece of bread and some macaroni for breakfast and were made to practice for an hour each morning before leaving for the streets. The reporter noted, "It seemed impossible that the world had given up stealing men from the African coast, only to kidnap children from Italy, and that the auction-block for negroes had been overturned in the Southern States only to be set up again for white infants in New York" (quoted in Zucchi 118).

Although Italy had laws in place that prevented children from emigrating to become street performers, the laws had little effect because the padroni were able to evade legal sanction with relative ease. When the reporter and a plainclothes police officer visited the musicians' apartments, they found ten boys sleeping on a straw bed. "An eight-year-old had lash scars on his back and rope scars on his wrists, as did some of the other boys. The padrone explained that the boys had misbehaved. The children were filthy; the dirt 'was caked on them.' Other rooms in the same building were examined

that evening, each of them revealing similar scenes" (Zucchi 120). In a separate building, a total of seventeen adults and children lived in a windowless apartment designed for two. Italians in New York worked to end the trade, but it wasn't until 1873 that their efforts were realized. When Glionna, a padrone, moved from Boston to New Haven in search of a better market, the district attorney and police chief arrested Glionna "for holding the four children as slaves. The arrest was made under the Personal Liberty Bill of 1854, which had been passed to nullify the Fugitive Slave Act but had never been used for that purpose" (121). A hearing was held to determine whether or not the children were being held as slaves. Glionna was ultimately found guilty of owning and trafficking in child slaves and was imprisoned until his bail was paid and he moved to Canada. This was the first time a padrone had ever been arrested for owning child slaves (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. *Harper's Weekly* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1873) 801. Picture caption reads: "The Italian Boys of New York – Tortures of the Training Room."

In the above image from the *Harper's Weekly* September 13, 1873 issue, a padrone is whipping a child who holds a violin. On the left side of the frame, a monkey sits atop a barrel organ, pointing a finger toward the scene. In the background, a few children (and an adult) watch while others sleep through the ordeal. Less than ten years after the end of the Civil War, an image depicting a master whipping the bare back of a child must have conjured the idea of slavery in the minds of *Harper's Weekly* readers. With complacent onlookers lounging around the periphery, the image seems to suggest that another form of slavery, one kept secret, as the whipping occurs inside, behind closed doors and covered windows, has replaced the earlier. The words "E viva Italia" printed on the far right wall unquestionably mark the padrone and the children as Italian. With this detail, the image asks the viewer to remember that *foreigners*, not U.S. citizens, have instituted this kind of child slavery. When viewed in this light, the Italian boy of *The House of the Seven Gables* is less the figure of mischief whose silence and disappearance must be bought, with which most of Hawthorne's contemporaries would have been familiar, and more a likely victim of abuse at the hands of a padrone.

While instruments such as the harpsichord and the organ and the music written for and played on them are typically hailed as art, barrel organs, their music, and their grinders seem to be universally despised as public nuisances, despite the element of degradation underscoring the children's performances, which might otherwise inspire charitable sentiments in listeners. An 1875 article in The *Daily Evening Bulletin* of San Francisco declares in its opening sentence, "It is not an easy thing to be an organ." While the author of this article, titled "Hard on the 'Organs,'" remains sensitive toward the supposed feelings of the instrument, the vast majority of his contemporaries direct their

sympathies toward the person subjected to its sound. Nineteenth-century periodicals also reveal a number of humorous sketches made at the expense of barrel organs, which serve to demonstrate popular conceptions of the instrument. The *Daily Arkansas Gazette* of April 12, 1868, for example, ridicules a public speaker's voice by comparing it to the sound of a "cracked barrel organ and a chorus of bull terriers in a street fight." On July 12th, 1873, the *New York Times* ran an article titled "Noisy New-York," which described New York as "the noisiest City in the world" with a population that "submits to annoyances and nuisances which no other civilized community would tolerate […] Noise is King of New-York, and brain and body both are racked day and night by its never-ceasing assertions of authority." Toward the end of the article, the author begins to name specific causes of the noise. Chief among them are Italian organ grinders. "If you ignore and strive to turn a deaf ear to him, he vindictively and doggedly grinds away to punish you. […] This is the great Summer nuisance of New-York […]." Even in the late-twentieth century, music historian Arthur Orde-Hume writes of the majestic organ as having been "prostituted to become the razzmatazz street musician's tool of trade" (20).

While public disdain for street music would reach its full potential in the United States in the latter part of the nineteenth century, in Europe, such open contempt was a regular occurrence much earlier. According to Schafer,

> Intellectuals were irritated by [street music]. Serious musicians were outraged – for frequently it appears that unmusical persons would engage in the practice, not at all to bring pleasure, but merely to have their silence bought off. But resistance moved to the middle class as well, as soon as it contemplated an elevation of life style. After art music moved indoors,

> street music became an object of increasing scorn, and a study of European noise abatement legislation between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries shows how increasing amounts of it were directed against this activity. (65-6)

One might conclude that nineteenth-century Americans would have heard street musicians in much the same way as their European counterparts did.[27] Although the topic of barrel organs as a public annoyance did not appear in American newspapers en masse until the latter part of the nineteenth-century, such articles are likely the culmination of the previous half-century's distaste of the sound, as evidenced by such fictive works as *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851) and such poetic works as Oliver Wendell Holmes' "The Music-Grinders" (1836).

The aversion that many people felt for the barrel organ was not entirely the instrument's fault. Much of the general population's repugnance to the instrument stemmed from other issues besides the music that emanated from it. Aside from the barely concealed public displeasure with foreign grinders, people had a difficult time appreciating the repetition of barrel organ melodies. "The same tune would be played over and over again and, if the organ was out of tune, the organ-grinder, for such was he termed, would seldom notice or, if he did would not dream of stopping for such a trifling

[27] According to one source, citizens of Mexico City might not have had such an open aversion to the barrel organ. In *Travels Over the Table Lands and Cordilleras of Mexico During the Years 1843 and 1844* (1847), Albert M. Gilliam, a former U.S. consul to California, writes about meeting the first "American Negro" – an escaped slave who fled to Mexico – he had seen since Vera Cruz. "Simon said that an Italian had taught him how to *grind* the organ, and that he was traveling through Mexico with that instrument, at which business he would do well if it were not for the ladrones [thieves] who never failed to secure his profits" (194). Yet Gilliam himself seemed to have shared typical U.S. sentiments toward the instrument: "Simon was desirous that I should employ him as a servant, but […] not wishing to be troubled with the music of his organ, as his speaking English was no inducement, I determined to decline the proposition" (195).

detail" (Orde-Hume 237). As an instrument of repetition, the barrel organ takes on characteristics of the refrain that Deleuze and Guattari write of in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987). "The role of the refrain has often been emphasized: it is territorial, a territorial assemblage. Bird songs: the bird sings to mark its territory" (344). In *Village Bells* (1998), Alain Corbin writes of a similar kind of territorial demarcation through sound. "The emotional impact of a bell helped create a territorial identity for individuals living always in range of its sound. When they heard it ringing, villagers, townsfolk, and those 'in the trades' . . . experienced a sense of being rooted in space" (95). Similarly, the Italian boy in *The House of the Seven Gables* returns to the same spot to "scatter [his] melodies," marking the street outside the Pyncheon house as his territory and Phoebe's coins as his own possessions. Indeed, the only way the Italian boy can claim ownership of anything is through the sound of the barrel organ. In a society where such autonomy is normally denied him, where his freedom is prescribed by a padrone and his movements are dictated by members of a higher, non-foreign class, the Italian boy's melodies offer him a kind of agency over the aural space in which the noise travels. In this way, too, his music becomes a sort of anthem, a way of demonstrating his sense of belonging to and identification with a specific place, a place that has previously, through Phoebe's patronage and Clifford's "rapturous delight," been hospitable to him. In speaking about the moment in 2006 when illegal immigrants sang the US national anthem in Spanish, Judith Butler notes, "Surely, such singing takes place on the street, but the street is also exposed as a place where those who are not free to amass, freely do so. . . . [T]he song can be understood not only as the expression of freedom or the longing for enfranchisement – though it is, clearly, both those things – but also as restaging the street,

enacting freedom of assembly precisely when and where it is explicitly prohibited. . .” (63). The boy’s literal situation offers significant differences from that which Butler describes; however the sentiment driving the two instances bears some similarity. Despite unsympathetic reactions from listeners, the Italian boy, the political parade (to Clifford’s ear if not the narrator’s), and the anthem singers, alike, use the street as a way to publicly announce that they, too, belong. Though their full “enfranchisement” has not yet been realized, they yet feel a sense of loyalty and attachment to their respective places of anthemic production. Such a proclamation through noise and movement is bold for the Italian boy, considering that, based on what the reader observes from Hawthorne’s text and what we infer from newspapers and Cerqua’s work, the boy’s life, like the lives of the Spanish-speaking immigrants, is one of marginality and restriction within the nation.

In neither instance, however, is there a “happy” ending. The gentleman shoos the Italian boy away from the Pyncheon house, while, according to Butler, “Bush says, ‘No, the national anthem can only be sung in English,’” (Butler 69). Organ grinders were perceived as producers of offensive noise by many mid- to late-nineteenth century listeners, probably as much for the repetitive off-pitch melodies of their instruments as for the unsoundliness of their accents and the unsightliness of their attire. Yet Clifford, true to form, finds the Italian boy’s music quite favorable and welcomes him to the doorstep the first time he appears there. Whereas the narrator imagines other “New-Englanders” passing the boy and the monkey without much more than a glance, Clifford proves “a being of another order. He had taken childish delight in the music, and smiled, too, at the figures which it set in motion” (164-5). Yet again, Clifford distinguishes himself from others in the novel through his listening preferences. Within the barrel

organ, and animated by the instrument's turning crank, is a "company of little figures […] in all their variety of occupation – the cobbler, the blacksmith, the soldier, the lady with her fan, the toper with his bottle, the milk-maid sitting by her cow [… T]he Italian turned a crank; and, behold! every one of these small individuals started into the most curious vivacity" (163). As opposed to sound and people forming an immense "human tide," the barrel organ attempts to portray a miniature version of humanity, a "most curious vivacity." Once again, as it was for Clifford, the barrel organ's noise seems to serve as a symbol for, as Butler phrases it, "the expression of freedom or the longing for enfranchisement" (63). The figurines represent an imagined community in which the Italian boy is not continually pushed out, but rather is a central, orchestrating figure, by whose hand and work the community thrives.

The "vivacity," conveyed by the figures, however, is "curious." When examined on a literal level, their life is artificial, a "pantomimic scene" contrived by figurines, a crank, a system of wheels and axles, and a boy's arm. Clifford recognizes the figurines' situation as one analogous to his own. Just as their mobility and actions are dictated by the whims of another being, so, too, have Clifford's been dictated by the whim of his Pyncheon cousin. Whereas Clifford wishes to join the national body that the marching band parade represents, the reader finds instead that his life is metaphorically portrayed in the less-exuberant barrel organ. Trapped within the confines of the barrel organ, the "company of little figures" seems to exemplify not only Clifford's life in miniature, but others connected with the House of the Seven Gables as well. As the figurines are compelled toward animation at the sound of the music, for example, so, too is Hepzibah bound to move according to the sound of the shop's bell. Likewise, not even Judge

Pyncheon can be exempt from correlation with the barrel organ's dramaturgy. At the end of the scene, the narrator shifts into a moralizing tone. Once all of the figures have stopped their pantomime of daily chores, habits, and obsessions, the narrator notes, "All were precisely in the same condition as before they made themselves so ridiculous by their haste to toil, to enjoy, to accumulate gold, and to become wise. Saddest of all, moreover, the lover was none the happier for the maiden's granted kiss!" (163-4). This moment seems to speak directly to Hawthorne's preface to the novel: The author "would feel it a singular gratification, if this Romance might effectually convince mankind (or, indeed, any one man) of the folly of tumbling down an avalanche of ill-gotten gold, or real estate, on the heads of an unfortunate posterity, thereby to maim and crush them, until the accumulated mass shall be scattered abroad in its original atoms" (2). Thus, the figures, called relentlessly to their individual endeavors, only end up dissatisfied and no better off than when they began – worse, in fact, because their toils might have been better spent.

Indeed, the repetition of the instruments' music and of the figurines' movements recalls the sense of generational repetition found throughout the novel. This figurative spinning of wheels that the figurines portray also drives Judge Pyncheon throughout the novel. Like the figures, he seems to be made "ridiculous by [his] haste to toil" for the accumulation of gold and land. Also like the figures, he is trapped in his toils, unable to act otherwise, by the novel's second moral, which Hawthorne outlines in his preface, "namely, that the wrong-doing of one generation lives into the successive ones, and, divesting itself of every temporary advantage, becomes a pure and uncontrollable mischief" (2). Holly Jackson discusses the idea of succession in *The House of the Seven*

Gables in terms of "classic American political ideals" (274). She posits that "this romance critiques the aristocratic family model, arguing that passing down property more often brings misfortune than fortune to the inheritors. . . . [I]n its ultimate protection and restoration of the family and its material legacy, perhaps no other work so clearly captures the persistent American ambivalence on this issue, the impulse to preserve ancestral status despite its antidemocratic implications" (274). While the novel warns readers of the futility of preserving "ancestral status," the characters themselves are caught up in the cyclicality of inheritance, of names, of occupations, of inhabited space. The barrel organ figurines capture the ineffectiveness of such a pattern through their endless redundancy, and Hawthorne seems to suggest that the figures are equally "ridiculous" in their portrayal of democratic success as the Pyncheon family. Finally, just as the figures' labor abruptly ends at the hand of a power greater than their own, so, too does Judge Pyncheon's (as the Pyncheon who most closely embodies the ideals of the original and elite Pyncheons), despite "all the other items of his memoranda" that will remain undone (Hawthorne 271).

Notably, the only other culturally marginalized entities in the novel, aside from the Italian boy, are the absent-present Indians who signed the deed that gave the Pyncheon family rights to vast tracts of land. In the absence of any physical Indians, though with the constant reminder of their one-time presence, the Italian boy serves as a substitute corporeal "foreign" element in the novel, as well as in the national imagination, recapitulating, so to speak, the silenced Indian. Such a notion is an especially apt application to a boy whose livelihood depends upon repetition: of location, of crank turning, of melody. In a generation or two, the figure of the immigrant child organ

grinder would likewise "vanish." For Hawthorne, Native Americans belonged to the past; they were ephemeral figures, destined to vanish completely. In his *American Notebook* on December 6th, 1837, in the midst of the Second Seminole War and three months after King Phillip's capture in Florida, Hawthorne writes, "Our Indian races having reared no monuments, like the Greeks, Romans, and Egyptians, when they have disappeared from the earth, their history will appear a fable, and they misty phantoms" (39). Hawthorne was not alone in believing Native Americans to be in the process of disappearing. Renee L. Bergland notes, that as "the debate over Indian rights moved much closer to Hawthorne's home" in the 1830s, "Native Americans were described as 'vanished' far more often than they were described as vanquished. Of course, the construction was counterfactual. [… F]lesh and blood, living Native Americans were conceived and even perceived as ghosts or ghostly figures" (149-50). U.S. democratic expansion hinged on the process of Indian removal, and popular American compliance with such endeavors was aided by the vanishing fallacy. We see this notion exemplified in *The House of the Seven Gables* through the Indian deed, which is the novel's concrete evidence of the absence of Indians. Even the failing descendants of the Pyncheon house are physical bodies in the novel's present. Though the plot of the novel circulates around the idea of the Indian deed, all that remains of the Native Americans who signed it is a sheet of paper and the "hieroglyphic" autographs inscribed on it.

Perhaps even more significant than the visual absence of Indians in *The House of the Seven Gables* is their aural absence, an oddity considering the din they create in Hawthorne's earlier fiction. In "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," (1832) for example, Hawthorne describes the noise of the midnight procession as uproarious, "sending forth a

fresher discord now that no intervening buildings kept it from the ear" (44). Amidst the parade, Robin notes a "single horseman [who…] rode onward as the leader," and just behind him followed "wild figures in the Indian dress and many fantastic shapes without a model, giving the whole march a visionary air, as if a dream had broken forth from some feverish brain" (44). The Indians in the short story, though distinctly surreal in their appearance are unmistakably part of a loud raucous that disturbs the slumber of an entire town. In "Young Goodman Brown," (1835), Hawthorne's Indians are equally prone to cacophony: "Scattered also among their pale-faced enemies were the Indian priests, or powwows, who had often scared their native forest with more hideous incantations than any known to English witchcraft" (98). Presumably, these Indians take part in the singing of "Verse after verse […] of that dreadful anthem." Although the narrator writes of "pale-faced enemies" as though sympathetic to the Indians, he is, himself, an outsider to the assembly. This idea is underscored by his interpretation of their language as "hideous incantations," and their singing, presumably unlike that of the narrator's fellow (white) countrymen, as a "dreadful anthem." This moment, too, is reminiscent of Butler and Spivak's discussion. On the singing of the national anthem in Spanish, Butler suggests, "this also involves a deformation of dominant language, and reworking of power, since those who sing are without entitlement. But that does not mean their lives are not mired in power. Obviously, the folks who are singing are not singing from a state of Nature. They're singing from the streets in San Francisco and Los Angeles. And this means that they alter not just the language of the nation but its public space as well." In "Young Goodman Brown," however, the narrator finds himself in the midst of what he considers a "deformation of dominant language," as he notes that the Indians' incantations are

comparable, though distinct from, those of "English witchcraft." Likewise, there is a sense in the story of a "reworking of power," as the narrator finds himself incapacitated at the sight and sound of the Indians. Butler and Hawthorne diverge, however, when Butler suggests that the people are not "singing from a state of Nature," but from the streets, thus altering the nation and "public space as well."

Hawthorne's story takes place in the wildest of natural spaces, removed from any semblance of the "real world" with which the narrator is familiar. If Butler's logic holds true, then we might conclude that the Indians' "dreadful anthem," sung in private, among themselves with but a single voyeur, alters nothing. Nevertheless, in the act of singing their anthem and repeating it "verse after verse," even in a natural, semi-private space, the Indians yet demarcate their sonic space and claim the land therein as their own territory. The white narrator, in this particular space, subsequently becomes the "foreign" intruder: He does not know the language or the melody of the anthem and, therefore, cannot participate in the territorialization that the singing of it engenders. Further, like Hawthorne, to whom "Yankee Doodle," "Hail Columbia," and the music of a brass band are indecipherable, so, too, is the Indians' anthem unintelligible noise to the narrator's ears. Although the Indians are able to create the sense of unity and community that Clifford longs for from the window's ledge, the narrator is repulsed by it because of their spectral otherness. Thus, "Young Goodman Brown" explores Hawthorne's fear that either the "phantoms" might yet be more extant than their "misty" visages would suggest, or else that their apparitions may yet possess some element of power.

However, *The House of the Seven Gables* offers a different take on Native Americans than Hawthorne's other fiction. In this novel, they are not represented as

ghosts of any kind, horrific – enchanting, or otherwise. Rather, Hawthorne writes Matthew Maule as the haunting figure and incorporates Indians as mundane, long-deceased, and ill prepared, dealmakers. As with any person of Hawthorne's day, a visual record of the Indian landowners' existence might be maintained, but an aural record cannot be. Thus, while the Indians of the novel are silenced in a literal sense, I would argue that *The House of the Seven Gables* is Hawthorne's acknowledgment of the fate of Native Americans in the United States, fourteen years after his journal entry suggested they had "disappeared," only to be remembered in history as "fables" and "phantoms." To include a non-present, silenced version of the Indian figure in a novel about containment and dispossession is to recognize that those figures did not "vanish" only to become the "misty phantoms" of the national imagination, but were and remain human beings, removed from Hawthorne's immediate view and confined to other territories. Consequently, the Indians' silence in *The House of the Seven Gables* recalls by contrast the anthem-singing Indians of "Young Goodman Brown." Far from aurally claiming their territory by discordant song, and striking fear in the breasts of white men with their sound and appearance, the Indians of *The House of the Seven Gables* willingly surrender their land and become, by Hawthorne's own hand, no more than a silent mark on a page that nobody seems to be able to find. Thus Hawthorne reenacts, through fictional silence, the government's Indian removal policy.

When the gentlemen on the street encounter the Italian boy at the threshold of the old Pyncheon home, Hawthorne seems to create a microcosmic representation of the national narrative of Native American removal. "Come away from that doorstep, and go somewhere else with your nonsense! [… B]e off with you at once!" (295). The narrator

later makes note of the "disappearance of the Italian boy, with his unseasonable melodies" (297). In this way, the Italian boy metaphorically suffers the same fate as the Indians and Clifford in the novel. Each is silenced and, in their own ways, removed. The difference among the three is that the narrative ultimately restores Clifford's agency and everything that goes along with it – including his voice, his freedom, and his territory – while the Italian boy and the Indian remain in exiled silence. Yet, despite the parallel histories of the Italian boy and the Indians, that the Italian boy appears as a physical, visualized, and audible figure, suggests that, in Hawthorne's mind, his situation is distinct from that of the absent Indians in the novel. There abides a crucial difference between expulsion from and containment within the territory (Butler 34). Thus, while the Indians are expelled to spaces beyond the borders of the nation-state (and to spaces that exist beyond the borders of Hawthorne's mind), the Italian boy is contained within the territory, imagined not as vanished, but as removed from one space and, consequently, inhabiting another. Though admittedly undesirable, the Italian boy yet remains a member of the national community, capable of "restaging the street" with his music.

CODA: "Undomesticated Music" and the Noise from Pandemonium

Apparently, Ambrose Bierce well understood the sentiments regarding barrel organs expressed in nineteenth-century newspapers. Like Hawthorne, Bierce explores the intersection of music and noise in his *Devil's Dictionary*, which began in 1881 as part of his weekly column, continued until 1906, and was published in its complete form in 1911. Bierce leaves some interpretation in the hands of the reader when he defines noise

as "undomesticated music," suggesting that noise might be anything from music that lacks control, to music produced outside of a domestic space, to music made by an "undomesticated" (foreign or otherwise wild) person.[28] Bierce's "Hades in Trouble: An Authentic Description of Ancient Pandemonium" (1888) presents a barrel organ as a recurring and disagreeable source of noise in the underworld. Lawrence Berkove posits that this story, originally published in the *San Francisco Examiner*, had been forgotten by Bierce and therefore never reworked, despite its being more worthy of attention and collection than others of Bierce's short fiction that had been.[29] As Berkove notes, it is clear to the reader that Milton's *Paradise Lost* serves as Bierce's inspiration for "Hades in Trouble." For example, the demons in both works give "lofty speeches" and describe traversing similar landscapes (Berkove 69). However, a significant comparison that Berkove does not note in his brief essay is that of the organ. In *Paradise Lost*, Pandemonium (a term coined by Milton) is constructed in much the same way as an organ works:

> A third as soon had form'd within the ground
>
> a various mould, and from the boyling cells
>
> By strange conveyance fill'd each hollow nook,
>
> As in an Organ from one blast of wind
>
> To many a row of Pipes the sound-board breathes.

[28] The full definition reads as follows: "A stench in the ear. Undomesticated music. The chief product and authenticating sign of civilization" (132).
[29] Berkove suggests that Bierce's use of the initial "B" rather than a full signature on this story – the initial having been used since this was the second of two items that Bierce published in the *Examiner* that day – was the cause of the oversight.

Anon out of the earth a Fabrick huge

Rose like an Exhalation, with the sound

Of Dulcet Symphonies and voices sweet,

Built like a temple…" (I, 705-713).

In Milton's hell, the organ breathes life into the structures of the underworld, just as God, conversely, breathes life into Adam. For Milton, this parallel reveals a striking emphasis on who and what creates and who and what is created. In hell, creation is by and of inanimate objects; on earth, creation is by and of the living. Yet the organ and the buildings seem to be alive: In Milton's description, the organ does not merely blow air mechanically; rather, it "breathes" and makes sound and, although its purpose is anything but holy, it is both majestic and highly influential.[30]

Whereas Hawthorne invokes Pandemonium in the sound of the scissor grinder, implying a connection between Satan and Judge Pyncheon, Bierce uses the imagery of Pandemonium from *Paradise Lost* to form the foundation of his satire. Far from an imposing pipe organ metaphorically fashioning the great palaces of Hades, Bierce's hell employs a barrel organ (which could be imagined as a noisy, turn-crank cousin of the scissor grinder) as a means of relieving an eternity of boredom. "Satan gaped and stretched himself. 'Time,' he said, slowly, 'this has gone far enough. A little monotony goes a great way, even here. You must make a change, or you'll lose your place" (Berkov

[30] In *The Riverside Milton*, Roy Flannagan describes Milton's relationship to music in a footnote connected to the quote above: "Music is not bad in itself, but demonic music is seductive and enervating, demoralizing those who hear it" (376).

A Prescription 174).[31] When Time reveals that there is a "poor, lone, wandering devil, and he came to the gates turning the crank of what he calls an organ," Satan takes immediate interest, wondering, "Can he offer us any amusement?" Time responds, "I cannot recommend his instrument for harmony, but the chances are he may be able to narrate something interesting about his travels. […] Assuredly he has learned the good qualities of deviled-ham and wine."[32] Out of context, it would be difficult to determine based on syntax alone whether Time "cannot recommend [the grinder's] instrument" because he has never heard it, or because he has heard it. In context, however, the answer to this question becomes clear. Part of the humor here is that, like the newspaper articles quoted above, Time's goal is to make the instrument stop producing music – even if it means he and Satan will be subjected to an inevitably dull narrative on deviled-ham.

The barrel organ, though frequently appearing throughout the first pages of the story, departs from the text when Satan leaves for earth: "And seizing the hand organ he flung it over his shoulder and disappeared through the curtains" (178). Because Satan never responds to the barrel organ's music, it is difficult to pinpoint his motive for taking the instrument. It is clear that the other demons and the narrator despise it: "But hardly had the first strains of the frightful discord broke the air of that quiet apartment than Moloch jumped to his feet with a roar. 'Time! Time!' he shouted, banging on the gong, 'seize the wretched wanderer and kick him into chaos again!'"(175). The narrator describes hell as a peaceful, if dull, place, and the barrel organ as a disturber of that peace. For Moloch, the instrument is so painful to hear that it and its grinder should be kicked out of hell and sent to a worse place. Indeed, the familiarity of the tune played on

[31] Berkove includes the full text of the Bierce story in both his 1993 article and his 2002 book.
[32] The wandering devil, it is later discovered, is Satan's brother, Beelzebub.

the organ might be, in part, to blame for Moloch's reaction. Beelzebub suggests, "'I will first offer a melody very familiar to your Majesties. Thereupon he seized the crank, and giving it a few vigorous turns, he warmed himself and the instrument, and what might be mistaken for 'Give the Devil his Due' began to wail forth" (Berkove 175). The wandering musician attempts to break hell's monotony with "a melody very familiar," which, of course, only serves to perpetuate the tedium.

Although I cannot say with certainty, it seems possible that Bierce had the barrel organ in mind when he composed his definition of noise. As an instrument derived from much larger, more inspiring pipe organs, such as what Balzac and Milton describe, but designed for outdoor mobility, the barrel organ certainly can be considered "undomesticated." On a literal level, what was once stationary and located indoors (domestic) was made mobile and located primarily outdoors (thus, undomesticated), in the streets. Furthermore, it is clear from the newspaper articles quoted above and from Bierce's own short story, that the music of the barrel organ was more often considered a nuisance than a pleasure. According to Bethany Bryson in "'Anything but Heavy Metal': Symbolic Exclusion and Musical Dislikes," musical distaste stems from the ways in which music creates and defines group identity and social differentiations. Thus, the barrel organ might also be considered "undomesticated," in terms of the national setting, due to its common association with foreign, especially (but not only) Italian, grinders. The reader might interpret Satan's ascent to earth with the organ as his means of entertainment for the journey (this was, after all, what he was after at the story's start), or the reader might understand Satan's choice as revealing his intent to dispose of the organ in a place far away from hell, thus sparing Moloch and the other demons from further

interference with the quiet of hell. In either case, one point remains clear: the barrel organ came to earth from the depths of hell and was carried there by Satan himself.

Although "Hades in Trouble" was published over 35 years after *The House of the Seven Gables*, there remains a sense of continuity in the two texts with regard to perception of street music as noise. Whereas Bierce suggests that the barrel organ's sound cannot be tolerated, even in the depths of hell, Hawthorne, too, notes that Clifford alone appreciates the Italian boy's music: "Doubtless, more than one New-Englander – or let him be of what country he might, it is as likely to be the case – passed by, and threw a look at the monkey, and went on. […] Clifford, however, was a being of another order. He had taken childish delight in the music, and smiled" (164-5). Yet Bierce's story also implies an important shift in perception from the middle of the nineteenth century to the end. Bierce's characters demonstrate far less willingness to tolerate unwanted sound than Hawthorne's. While Hawthorne's characters notice and judge noise, they do nothing to alter it, in "Hades in Trouble," the demons take action against noise. While Hawthorne's characters experience containment and removal in various forms throughout the novel, as oftentimes revealed through moments of literary acoustic realism where noise predominates, Bierce's characters contain and remove noise itself.

CHAPTER 2

"THE MUSIC OF INDUSTRY AND ENTERPRIZE": HERMAN MELVILLE, ELIZABETH STUART PHELPS, AND THE NOISE OF THE FACTORY

When Charles Dickens traveled to the United States early in 1842, he decided to make a stop in Lowell, Massachusetts. Countless newspaper articles publicly welcomed "Boz" to the States. Generally, the authors adopted a tone of pomp and circumstance, proclaiming at times that "his genius" should be honored with the laurel wreath before such typical recipients as "those who have been successful in the field of battle, or who wear the titles of nobility or royalty."[33] Lowell factory owners, had they been privy to the author's written notes, could only have thought favorably of him. In the *American Notes for General Circulation* (1842), Dickens documents his journey to the factory town: "I assign a separate chapter to this visit; not because I am about to describe it at any great length, but because I remember it as a thing by itself, and am desirous that my readers should do the same" (145). Unlike the other destinations on his journey, Lowell was neither a major city nor the locale of a Governor's house, nor does the author consider it alongside such places. For Dickens, the Lowell visit was a moment apart, set aside for special consideration because of its striking and unexpected contrast to the "careless, moping, slatternly, degraded, dull reverse" that he had seen in England (156). After a lengthy, rough, train ride, distinguished by "a great deal of jolting, and a great deal of noise" (146) and by stops at "stations in the woods, where the wild impossibility of

[33] "The Weather Again." *The New England Farmer, and Horticultural Register*. 9 Feb. 1842. Pg. 254. In the same vein: "though we are a *title loving* nation, we are happy in this instance to see our our [sic] adulation pomed upon the *mind* of a distinguished foreigner, rather than on the tinsel of his decoration."

anybody having the smallest reason to get out, is only to be equaled by the apparently desperate hopelessness of there being anybody to get in" (150), Dickens finds in Lowell a visually pleasing, almost idyllic factory. While Dickens' reader is not at any loss for visual detail, the author omits all aural detail once he steps off the train.

There is no reason to doubt Dickens' "sharp eye" (76), which he trains toward the workers' relatively high quality of life in the Lowell mill. His ear, however, seems to be less reliable. For example, Dickens notes that "there is a joint-stock piano in a great many of the boarding-houses," (78), but no described sound accompanies the pianos.[34] A reader might wonder if the image of the piano should suggest implied music in his or her auditory imagination, or if the lack of sound description indicates instead that the Lowell mill workers were less musically than literarily inclined. The pianos are not solely implicated in the absence of described sound, however. Indeed, by omission of sonic detail, Dickens silences the entire grounds of the mill and the workers, even though the machines were likely loud enough to rival the noise of the train that carries him to Lowell. While the train "clatters over frail arches" and "rumbles upon the heavy ground" before it "suddenly awakens all the slumbering echoes in the main street of a large town" (151), Dickens turns a deaf ear toward the noise of the factory.[35] He neither acknowledges its existence nor describes its absence. In omitting the auditory experience of the Lowell mill from the text, the reader is left somewhat disoriented and wonders how

[34] Dickens does not say explicitly that the pianos aren't used during his visit, but the reader might infer it based on the omission of any indication that he has heard anyone play the piano. This is noteworthy considering his attention to the content of the *Lowell Offering*, the publication which he offers as a kind of parallel verification of "culture" at the mill.

[35] Dickens should have perceived some level of noise at the Lowell mill he visited. Alice Flanagan notes, "In some rooms, the machinery was very noisy, so workers often stuffed cotton in their ears. It was so difficult to hear over the noise that workers talked with their hands" (19).

to interpret the implications of this wholly visual factory encounter. Why is Dickens' visit to the Lowell mill, which is detailed in so many other respects, devoid of sound? Was the noise so commonplace in his contemporaries' soundscapes that he felt it unnecessary? Surely he noticed the roar of machinery or the peel of a bell "just as the dinner hour was over, and the girls were returning to their work" (Dickens 75). One answer to these questions might be that Dickens' subject was always meant to be the factory workers rather than the factory itself, or its machines. Amal Amireh could have been describing Dickens' *American Notes* in her book *The Factory Girl and the Seamstress* (2000) when she suggests, "The women factory workers were the main tourist attraction . . . Every visitor found it necessary to discourse about them, sometimes to the neglect of other scenes and details. The women were never talked to or considered individually, but were always observed from a distance, outside the factories, as crowds walking back and forth between the mills and the boarding houses" (6). As in Amireh's description, Dickens observes the women workers from a distance and "discourse[s] about them," but never with them; neither does he describe the discourses they might have had with each other. Dickens maintains the status quo in this regard. He offers haunting images of female masses dressed similarly, all with pleasant countenances, from which he "cannot recall or separate one young face. . ." (77). Whether intentionally or not, Dickens' women workers come to resemble the mass-produced commodities of the factory, each an identical, silent, objectified replica of the one before.

Continuing one of the central arguments of *The Endless Roar*, this chapter contends that nineteenth-century authors laid the foundation on which Modernists built their audible prose. In an article titled "Developing an Ear for the Modernist Novel:

Virginia Woolf, Dorothy Richardson and James Joyce" (2009), Angela Frattarola uses Dickens' emphasis on visual descriptions in the first chapter of *Great Expectations* to support her argument that "It is not until the modernist period that the novel becomes saturated with sound – both in content and form" (134). While I agree that many modernist novels are "saturated with sound," Frattarola erroneously suggests that such sonic saturation is purely a modernist phenomenon. With Charles Dickens as her representative pre-twentieth-century author, it is no wonder that she draws this conclusion. I contend, however, that it was the nineteenth-century writers who first grappled with the early onslaughts of industrial noise in their soundscapes and attempted, through their fiction, to lend meaning to what they heard. Dickens' tendency to favor the eye at the expense of the ear was an exception, rather than a rule. Thus, this chapter will listen for the factory sounds that Dickens omitted as it will attempt to understand the silences that he implied. Melville's "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids" (1855) and Phelps' *The Silent Partner* (1871) each takes a much closer listen to the American factory than Dickens' readers might have assumed possible and uses the sounds and silences found therein to aid their critique of the system. Though decades separate the publications of these texts, I find it useful to consider them together because jointly, these texts demonstrate what Dickens' account failed to: that the aural experience carries as much interpretive weight as the visual when included as part of the full sensory experience in factory literature.

In this chapter, I examine noise perception of U.S. industry as it pertains to gender expectations and to notions of "progress." Through the factory literature of Melville and Phelps, readers can better understand some of the social developments of the second half

of the nineteenth century, including the role of woman as hourly wage earner and the role of author as archivist and activist. In each text, larger institutional (and primarily masculine) forces, represented by mechanical noise, silence women's voices. However, whereas Melville's women workers remain distinctly silent throughout, Phelps' workers discover their voices most significantly through music and singing, which they use, in turn, to resist the system to which they are subject and to complicate and intensify their roles within it. Although typical analyses of Melville's diptych focus on the two societies, the two genders, or the two locations illustrated in each part, I argue that the two types of quiet conveyed in each are equally significant to an understanding of the text. Further, I suggest that Melville deconstructs the dichotomous quiet he initially proposes in "The Paradise" and "The Tartarus," respectively, as he reassigns the position of power from lawyers to narrator to maid, in turn.

Like Melville, Phelps explores the notion that the noise of the machine is powerful enough to silence her female characters; it chews up and spits out their voices. However, I argue that in giving her characters agency and the power to resist the noise of their oppressors with their own work songs, Phelps suggests that the factory system is on the threshold of change, and she asks her reader to aid in the transformation. These ideas challenge Sara Britton Goodling's notion that Phelps' novel is an example of sentimental naturalism. Again, like Melville's narrator, Phelps includes a character that disrupts the worker/factory and song/noise dichotomies in her movement between worlds. Rather than using her own voice for change, I argue that Perley attempts to change the factory system by changing the workers, specifically by making them more like her. She does this most frequently and most effectively through the image and music of Beethoven,

who represents to her the kind of bourgeois sense of culture that would have been otherwise inaccessible to the mill workers. I posit that in selecting the "*Andante*" from Beethoven's Seventh Symphony and Lemude's "Dreaming Beethoven" image to share with the mill workers, Perley demonstrates that she can never fully lose her class identity and, therefore, will never be able to make the kind of transformation that Phelps believes the factory needs. By considering Perley through Beethoven, the reader is better able to understand why her speech to the workers at the end of the novel discourages the workers' unionization and encourages their faith in the mill owners. Ultimately, through a reading of Melville and Phelps, I argue that silence, chosen or imposed, carries meaning; that women factory workers' voices had been stifled by the noise of the machine, which serves as a symbol of the patriarchal factory system at large; and that the reader is implicated in the perpetuation or revision of such a system.

In order to best discuss these issues, I offer the term "acoustic labor," which defines the described human-made sounds and silences of work. We might think about acoustic labor as the effect of, or the human response to, physical labor. Additionally, when the sounds themselves contribute to the labor of their creator, then we might define such sounds as providing "acoustic labor." In the texts I examine, as alluded to above, acoustic labor might manifest in the form of silence, song, or the cries of exhaustion or of unionization. Acoustic labor is the aural part of the process of a person's labor, but it is not, generally speaking, part of the (commercial) product of that labor.

Indeed, although some authors chose to write about factory life as better than it was in order to help improve public perception of factory workers at large, a reader of United States periodicals in the 1830s and 1840s, near the time of Dickens' United States

travels, might find noise featured among other basic descriptions of any factory. In 1839, a short story from *The Expositor* relates, "The Factory Girl returns home, and what can she do but sleep? what should she do, but seek oblivion from the noise, the racking noise of engines, the hell of sounds, which she has all day suffered?" Again in the *Southern Agriculturalist*, of 1845, visitors to the factories at Lowell describe how "Ten thousand spindles whirled with unceasing motion, and the sharp, quick, claptrap of a thousand looms was as deafening as the deep voice of the hurricane on the sea-shore." One news reporter described a visit to a cotton factory in New England, suggesting,

> The noise of the power-loom is somewhat like that of the hand-loom; but the former beats quicker and sharper; and when one, two or three hundred of them are at work in a room together, they make a tremendous racket, which is more than persons of weak nerves, delicate constitutions, or whatever it may be . . . are able to endure. Those accustomed to it, however, are not at all incommoded by it, and experience no bad effect from it, except now and then when it makes one hard of hearing, and injures the voice. (*The Knickerbocker* 1847)

In each instance quoted above, the author has taken pains to suggest that the noise of the factory is more than an incidental byproduct of the machinery. A careful reporter, it seems, could not ignore the "quick," "sharp" "racket" described in each piece, and many other similar sketches, any more than the workers who labored daily in it could. Subsequently, readers who had never been near a factory likely would have understood that one of its most distinctive features is the noise its machines produce.

Whereas Dickens' silences might be inferred due to an absence of sound

description, Melville's silences and quietudes in "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids" are prominently described within the prose. Elizabeth Rodrigues argues that "the presence and absence of speech as a mode of reflection, expression, and community" is the greatest "unifying contrast" between the two parts of the story. While the characters' speech is a significant aspect of the text, a point to which I will return later, Rodrigues fails to consider that crux of the story's contrast lies not in speech, nor in the silence that she defines as a lack of speech. Rather, it lies in the distinct connotations of quiet and noise in each; the sounds of the story are communicative, regardless of whether or not they are interrupted by the speech of characters.

Perhaps most striking about the places of the story is the means by which the author characterizes each as heavenly and hellacious in turn. Aural cues provided by the narrator are key in setting the tone of each place. The "Paradise of Bachelors" is a sonic oasis, easily locatable to the narrator, even if his directions are somewhat vague. In one short paragraph, he describes the process of moving from the "din" of London to the quiet of the Templar grounds: "you adroitly turn a mystic corner - not a street - glide down a dim, monastic way, flanked by dark, sedate, and solemn piles, and still wending on, give the whole care-worn world the slip, and, disentangled, stand beneath the quiet cloisters of the Paradise of Bachelors" (261). The Templar grounds are immediately identified as paradisiacal because they offer an escape from the "din" within their "quiet cloisters." A visitor hardly even needs to make a sound in approaching the place; instead of walking in the typical fashion, heels striking street stones, he would "glide" his way toward the grounds. The sound of the language used by the narrator also contributes to creating the quietude that steeps through the first part of the story. "The Paradise" "lies

not far from the Temple bar." The reader's ear is lulled by the rhythm and rhyme of the story's first words, which stand alone in a single paragraph. The cadence helps the reader orient herself as well by recalling medieval poetic accounts of mythic people and places; this Paradise, the language suggests, sounds like something familiar, despite its novelty. Moreover, the sentence would be written in iambic tetrameter, but for one extra syllable in the third iamb; thus from the sound of the very first sentence, Melville suggests to his reader that the Paradise will fail to be as idyllic as the opening paragraphs might otherwise suggest.

Throughout "The Paradise," Melville makes aural comparisons and contrasts between the stoic knights Templar and the jovial Bachelors who now inhabit their grounds. Such ruminations allow the reader to develop a comprehensive interpretation of the bachelors' lives. "The genuine Templar is long since departed," leaving in his place one who has "tumbled from proud glory's height," for "the Templar is to-day a Lawyer" (263). If little else remains of the Templar's former acclaim, however, the bachelors in Melville's story, despite their propensity for loquacity, have inherited and strictly maintained the tradition of quietude from the "stilly" hearted men who built their Temple to be "quite sequestered from the old city's surrounding din" (262-3). Indeed, "no part of London offers to a quiet wight so agreeable a refuge" as the Templar grounds (263). Any traveler who, like the narrator, finds himself "sick with the din and soiled with the mud of Fleet Street" might "turn a mystic corner" and "stand beneath the quiet cloisters of the Paradise of Bachelors" (261). As stilly as the Templars must have been in life, their costumes were not conducive to quiet. The narrator imagines the noise a Templar would make in contemporary times: "May the ring of their armed heels be heard, and the rattle

of their shields, as in mailed prayer the monk-knights kneel before the consecrated Host?" (262). A reader might imagine the racket of metallic interactions punctuating the otherwise quiet grounds, unnerving to anyone in earshot. For his costume, the Bachelor has improved upon the knights' and traded in the clamor of "the iron heel" in favor of the inaudible "boot of patent leather" (263). Such an adaptation allows the bachelors to remain in their luxurious quietude without any threat of mundane sonic interruption. We might guess that the knights instituted a tradition of silence (or such attempts toward silence as their armor allowed) to better facilitate prayerfulness in their "monastic," "cloistered" habitation.

To the bachelors, however, quiet seems to be less a sign of godliness and more a signifier of cultural refinement. Despite their lively conversation ("they related all sorts of pleasant stories" (268)) and copious alcohol consumption, the narrator maintains that a sense of hush pervaded all aspects of the Paradise. "And throughout all this nothing loud, nothing unmannerly, nothing turbulent. . . I afterward learned that, during the repast, an invalid bachelor in an adjoining chamber enjoyed his first sound refreshing slumber in three long, weary weeks. It was the very perfection of quiet absorption of good living, good drinking, good feeling, and good talk" (269). In short, mimicking Genesis, the narrator listened to the Paradise and heard that it was "good." In the Paradise, the invalid is able to have his first "sound refreshing" sleep in weeks. The narrator, it seems, intends for "sound" to achieve its full denotative potential: the invalid's slumber is "sound," to be sure, but in the context of a space that is "the very perfection of quiet absorption," the reader might also imagine that the gentler sounds of the Paradise "sound refreshing" enough to the invalid to send him into the deepest sleep.

Moreover, “nothing loud” is listed alongside “nothing unmannerly,” indicating a correlation between the two. Loudness is absent in this setting, but if it were present, it would be deemed unmannerly. The narrator notes that the waiter, Socrates, would not have remained to serve the men had he “perceived aught of indecorum” among them. Even bodily functions are in check here. The narrator observes, “though they took snuff very freely, yet not a man so far violated the proprieties, or so far molested the invalid bachelor in the adjoining room as to indulge himself in a sneeze. The snuff was snuffed silently, as if it had been some fine innoxious powder brushed off the wings of butterflies” (270). The atmosphere is marked by “Comfort - fraternal, household comfort.” Although conversation and pleasure define the narrator’s time with the bachelors, a “comfortable,” salubrious quiet pervades throughout. For the bachelors, silence restores health, generates friendships, symbolizes good breeding, and maintains servant loyalties. Quiet, therefore, holds only the most positive of connotations within the Paradise.

Traveling to the Tartarus is not as easy as traveling to the Paradise, but the narrator similarly defines his journey there through aural signals. Like Dickens’ account, Melville’s factory sketch was based on his own visit to a paper mill in January 1851. In “The ‘Plain Facts’ of Fine Paper in ‘The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids,” Graham Thompson posits that the exact mill was the Old Berkshire Mill in Dalton, Massachusetts. Melville wrote to his sister that he “got a sleigh-load of this paper” for himself (511). With respect to the papermaking machine, Thompson suggests, “Melville would have seen [it] in action in Dalton” (514). Likely Melville also would have heard it in action, perhaps even at some distance away. After several pages

describing his travel, the scenery, and his purpose, the narrator of Melville's diptych finally admits, "At first I could not discover the paper-mill" (274). He recognizes his proximity to it solely because of the noise that emanates therefrom: "Where stands the mill? Suddenly a whirring, humming sound broke upon my ear. I looked, and there, like an arrested avalanche, lay the large whitewashed factory" (274). The narrator's sense of disorientation as he searches for "The Tartarus" opposes the ease with which he locates the bachelor's quarters. The "sound *broke* upon" the narrator's ear, shattering any illusion that this place might allow for the type of "quiet," "gliding," and "wending" that typified his excursion to the Paradise before it. Whereas the bachelors have modified their shoes and clothing to eliminate the chance that sound might break unpleasantly upon their ears, such noises, and other much more obtrusive ones, define the paper-mill. Likewise, the language that begins the second part contrasts that of the first in its lack of poetic beauty: "The Tartarus . . . lies not far from Woedolor Mountain in New England." Although the two parts begin similarly ("The [place] lies not far from…"), the sentence that starts "The Tartarus" has no rhyme or meter. Rather, it serves the sole purpose of situating the narrative geographically. By the sound of the syntax that begins each section, the narrator differentiates between the two places: one is beautiful, the other functional.

As I noted previously, Elizabeth Rodrigues characterizes the bachelors by their speech and the maids by their silence. Through such a "unifying contrast," however, the essential properties of speech and silence are overlooked, namely, as Wendy Brown suggests in "Freedom's Silences," that "Silence and speech are not only constitutive of but also modalities of one another" (83). In her study, Brown "interrogates the presumed authenticity of 'voice'" and draws from Foucault in order to assert that silence is

paradoxical in its capacity to "engage opposites with regard to power - both to shelter power and to serve as a barrier against power" (87). In this way, "silences themselves must be understood as discursively produced, as part of discourse, rather than as its opposite. Hence silences are no more free of organization by power than speech is, nor are they any more inventable or protectable by us than speech is" (87-8). For Cheryl Glenn, whose approach to silence differs somewhat from Brown's, the power of silence lies in one's choice to use it. In *Unspoken: A Rhetoric of Silence*, Glenn writes, "When silence is our choice, we can use it purposefully and effectively" (13). Despite their different takes, both Glenn and Brown conceive of silence in terms of its relation to speech. By implying that acts of silence can be as discursive as acts of speech, Brown and Glenn allow for the possibility of intentional silent communication between people, or when applied to literary analysis, between characters.

Although their speech is free ("They related all sorts of pleasant stories" (268)), the bachelors' actions reveal "nothing loud" (269). In this respect, the subdued atmosphere that the men create and enjoy seems to have been a chosen course, perhaps jointly made out of respect for the invalid, for their waiter, and to maintain the traditional sonic balance between the hushed "central neighborhood" of the Templars and the "city's surrounding din" (263). Though they speak quietly, they speak from a position of "unconstraint" and "comfort." The bachelors experience the choice of silence and of speech that Glenn discusses as well as the freedom that Brown addresses. For the bachelors, paradoxical though it may seem, silence does not define the moments when speech ceases, as readers of Brown and Glenn might expect. Rather, silence occurs alongside speech and sets the keynote of the narrator's experience in the "Paradise."

The second half of Melville's story offers another opportunity to consider Brown and Glenn's ideas. While speech characterizes the bachelors, silence characterizes the mill girls: "Not a syllable was breathed. . . . The human voice was banished from the spot" (277). Although the narrator does speak with a "dark-complexioned man" and a boy named Cupid at the factory, the maids' imposed silence seems to convey that their existence at the mill is not as they would have it, if given a choice. Each girl's voice "was banished" by something other than herself. This is not the kind of silence that is "free from organization by power" which Brown describes, neither is it a choice being used "purposefully and effectively" as Glenn describes. Although the vocal silence imposed upon the maids in the Tartarus maintains its ability to communicate meaning, its message does not come from the girls themselves, but from the conditions under which they are subject. Thus, the acoustic labor of the lawyers and the mill workers might seem to be quantifiably similar in terms of decibel assignment, yet each group could not be more qualitatively distinct from the other.

Whereas "The Paradise" demonstrates an ornate, poetic prose style, "The Tartarus" relies heavily on the use of puns. For example, the narrator thinks aloud after having learned that the factory uses old rags to make its paper: "Tis not unlikely, then, … That among these heaps of rags there may be some old shirts, gathered from the dormitories of the Paradise of Bachelors. But the buttons are all dropped off. Pray, my lad, do you ever find any bachelors' buttons hereabouts?" To which Cupid responds, "None grow in this part of the country. The Devil's Dungeon is no place for flowers" (280). This moment trains the reader to consider wordplay throughout the story. Thus, while silence can be powerful when chosen, the reader learns that the girls' brows are

"ruled," literally, as the paper etches its lines across their faces, and figuratively as the paper seems to control their bodies. Of more significance, however, are the plays on words that follow this image. "Not a syllable was breathed. Nothing was heard but the low, steady overruling hum of the iron animals. The human voice was banished from the spot" (277). With their "steady overruling hum," the machines do more than just drown out other sounds; their noise rules continuously over everyone in the vicinity. It is their relentless "overruling hum" that ultimately and universally silences the women in their acoustic labor. This suggests that the women are not merely governed, so to speak, by the paper that they produce, but that the machines maintain the most significant control, as they "overrule" even the ruling paper. The passive phrase, "was banished," allows the reader to imagine that the "overruling hum" itself has expelled the maids' voices, and that they have learned that their vocal acoustic profile is no match for the steady hum. Again, the narrator crosses some "damp, cold boards" to note that "Round and round here went the enormous revolutions of the dark colossal water-wheel, grim with its one immutable purpose" (278). Once again, the narrator allows for wordplay when he describes the wheel as "immutable." Literally, the wheel is "unchanging," but the word choice suggests that the sound of the wheel is also as unable to be silenced as the "overruling hum" of the machines. Words such as "damp," "cold," "grim," suggest that the reader is meant to "hear," so to speak, the noise of the wheel with negative connotations.

Melville's contemporaries might not necessarily have assumed that he would write about factory noise in such a way. In the 1830s and 1840s, the decades leading up to the publication of "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids," Northerners were often quite sympathetic to the sounds of industrialization. They situated the new

mechanical noises within existing frameworks of familiar sounds. As Mark M. Smith notes in *Listening to Nineteenth-Century America* (2000), the first human-made flat line sounds developed out of the industrial revolution and inspired many listeners to make comparisons between the static drone of machinery and the continuous hum of crickets (127).[36] Thus, even people who migrated from quiet rural areas to teeming urban centers seemed to easily catalogue and accommodate the new noises. By mid-century, "Industrial soundscapes were now marketed as vacation soundscapes" (Smith 130), as might be inferred by Dickens' visit to Lowell and Melville's narrator's factory tour. A newspaper article from July, 1846, written from the perspective of "a visitor" suggests that, upon entering a locomotive-engine factory, "The ear is saluted with the noise of some hundreds of hammers reverberating on boilers and anvils, and the eye is startled by the sight of so many blazing fires and sundry workmen. . ." ("Locomotive"). While the visitor's visual experience "startled" him, his aural experience offers a contrasting connotation. As opposed to the sudden shock of the image, the visitor perceives the high-profile noise of the factory, which "saluted" him, as respectful; the verb conveys a sense of deference. Although the entire experience is one of "novelty" for him, he seems to have anticipated the noise of tools and machines but not the sight of fire and workmen. This suggests that, perhaps, the noise's favorable reputation preceded the visitor's encounter with it. As the tour of the factory progresses, special attention is given to "The boiler yard, or what is facetiously termed the 'musical saloon'" which the author describes as a place of

[36] Henry David Thoreau makes the same kind of comparison between the sounds of nature and the sounds of machinery: ". . . and for the last half hour I have heard the rattle of railroad cars, now dying away and then reviving like the beat of a partridge, conveying travellers from Boston to the country" (151). Again, he notes: "The whistle of the locomotive penetrates my woods summer and winter, sounding like the scream of a hawk sailing over some farmer's yard . . ." (152).

particular interest: “Musical, this portion of the works most certainly is, and music of the right sort, too - the music of industry and enterprize [sic].” Although the term “musical saloon” is presented to the visitor with an acknowledged tongue-in-cheek flare, he quickly appropriates the term, stripping it of its irony when he elects to hear the noise of the boiler yard as a kind of symphony of capitalism. Considering that public opinion often held that industrial noise was a favorable mark of the country’s progress, Melville’s sketch might have been thought of as unusual or as the initiation of a new kind of conversation.

The factory noise is so powerful in “The Tartarus” that not even the narrator from his removed vantage point can escape it. He notes, “My unaccustomed blood curdled at the sharp shriek of the tormented steel” and later, “a scissory sound smote my ear, as of some cord being snapped” (280, 283). In both instances, Melville uses alliterative “sh” or “s” and consonant “t” sounds to replicate the “scissory” machinery noise for the reader. Thus, maid, narrator, and reader alike experience the machinery’s “immutable” “overruling hum.” In *Working Women, Literary Ladies* (2008), Sylvia Jenkins Cook suggests that Melville’s allegory is bleaker by far than the reality of factory life for women. He forgets, she notes, that women like Sarah Bagley, rather than remaining silent, in their own form of acoustic labor, “were articulating the grievances of fellow workers in public forums” (130). Melville’s story, Cook argues, is a “qualitative step toward dehumanization that the actual women workers were far from ready to concede” (131). Yet Cook misses two important ideas that, perhaps, complicate the text. The first is that the machines are humanized sovereigns, while the women workers, though they begin to resemble the commodity they produced, are also represented as human and

fallible in their susceptibility to cold and noise. The second is that, while the male factory workers seem to be relatively unaffected by the rule of the machines, the narrator finds himself becoming as subject to the machines' rule as the maids are. In the final dialogue, the "dark-complexioned man" tells the narrator that, like those of the maids, "Your cheeks look whitish yet, sir" (286). Thus, there is never a simple dichotomy in "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids."

Melville continues to complicate the dichotomous silences in "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids" through the narrator. Sylvia Jenkins Cook notes, "the first half of the diptych presents careful reports of the bachelors' talk" (130). However, although the reader comes to understand that the bachelors are highly loquacious, their discussions are never quoted directly; rather, they are always recounted in the narrator's own voice. "They related all sorts of pleasant stories. . . . One told us how mellowly he lived when a student at Oxford . . . Another bachelor . . . by his own account, embraced every opportunity of leisure to cross over into the Low Countries" (268). Though one bachelor is said to give "his own account," the narrator does not quote him directly, but appropriates the man's words, restating them in his own, and providing the reader with, merely, third-hand information. When considered in this way, the bachelors lose their power with regard to speech and silence as their tales, and the quiet ways in which they are expressed, remain at the mercy of the narrator's perception.

Considering Glenn's idea that there is power in the choice of silence over speech, the reader expects the maids to remain powerless throughout the story. Melville's narrator, more willing to speak to the women workers than Dickens was, stops his independent search to ask: "One moment, my girl; is there no shed hereabouts which I

may drive into?" She does not respond as the narrator expects: "Pausing, she turned upon me a face pale with work, and blue with cold; an eye supernatural with unrelated misery" (276). The narrator quickly ends the encounter: "'Nay,' faltered I, 'I mistook you. Go on; I want nothing.'" The narrator begins the exchange by asserting his dominance; he addresses the woman he meets as "*my* girl." Yet, despite her "pale…misery," the girl quickly gains the upper hand by responding to his query with a pause and a look. In refraining to speak, she challenges the narrator's perceived position of power; she makes him falter in his speaking, and he ultimately recants his request for a shed. By exploring a spectrum of nuances regarding speech and silence in "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids," Melville's story challenges reader expectations regarding power in relation to class and gender. While acknowledging that the lawyers, in their luxurious repose, perpetuate systems of oppression, and the maids, in their pale servitude, are at the mercy of them, Melville's story also imagines a disruption of the hierarchy of power, if only for a brief moment.

"Savage Noises": *The Silent Partner* and the Audible Factory

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the soundscapes of urban and industrial areas continued to be at the center of public conversation and printed debate. However, the tone of the conversation seemed to have changed in the latter decades. The author of a February, 1871 article, which first appeared in *The Saturday Review*, notes a new development among his fellow listeners: "Even within the century a great change has come over men's endurance of sound. Sympathies have turned into antipathies"

("Noise" *Littell's*). It is clear that Melville anticipated this shift when he examined the ill effects of the factory on its employees and visitors. Hoping to regain his contemporaries' sympathy for noise, however, the author of the *Saturday Review* suggests, "It is a misfortune to be abnormally sensitive to noise, and often affects the character unfavourably, making it cynical and unsocial" ("Noise" *Littell's*). Not only is sensitivity to noise a cause for concern in the author's eyes, but he also views the condition as an affliction of the worst order: "These victims of silence grow up creepy… and want courage to assert themselves. And it is this consideration, the conviction that noise is one of nature's invigorators, that prompts us to defend it against its legion of enemies." He concludes that "it is lawful, recognized noise for the million who live remote from the turmoil of cities, which we plead for as one of the important elements of healthful life along with fresh air and pure water." The author makes painstaking efforts to align "the turmoil of cities" with the "important elements of nature" when he notes that noise is "one of nature's invigorators." In doing so, he normalizes noise and portrays quiet as the unnatural anomaly. The article's author acts as a kind of apologist for noise in his suggestion that the problem does not lie in the production (natural or otherwise) of noise, but with those people of weaker constitutions who end up "the victims of silence."

For the sake of his own argument, the author would be well advised to conclude his thoughts here. However, he continues by noting that noise is beneficial to everyone, including factory employees, ". . . except now and then when it makes one hard of hearing, and injures the voice, as it almost always does if they sing much at their work." Although this outcome seems less than desirable, the author understands it to be a mild side effect of noise subjection. Yet such an account recalls the silent maiden workers in

Melville's story, who, we might imagine, could have lost their voices from too much singing - or shouting, perhaps - amidst the noise of machinery. This serves as a reminder that the issues surrounding noise pertain not only to changing sonic environments and a loss of natural soundscapes, but also to human health and a loss of hearing and voice. This idea is at the heart of Elizabeth Stuart Phelps' *The Silent Partner* (1871), which was published in the same year as the *Saturday Review* article. I do not see this as a coincidence, but, rather, an indication that the idea of noise was a significant point of conversation and contention in the urban areas of the U.S. east.

Noise drives the tragic plot of Phelps' *The Silent Partner*. The novel follows Perley Kelso, who becomes a "silent" mill partner after her father dies, and her friend Sip, an employee in the mill. While negotiating her role in the business, Perley becomes invested in the lives of Sip and her sister Catty, and frequents – for the first time – the mill town in which they live. Catty is unable to speak or hear anything but the mill noise, which leads to her tragic death at the end of the novel. Perley and Sip dedicate themselves so wholly to reforming the factories that they refuse proposals of marriage in order to focus on their vocational goals. Through sound descriptions and the circumstances surrounding Catty's life and death, the novel seems to argue that noise is not a marker of progression, but of regression; it is not salubrious, but harmful.

As my previous chapter alludes to with regard to the Italian boy, people living in urban areas in the nineteenth century often associated noise with lower classes and quiet with upper classes. The average 19th century reader might imagine that Perley, as a member of upper class society, lived a life of quiet that would have been inherited or purchased and, otherwise, taken for granted. This idea is presented in the first pages of

the novel when the narrator describes the sounds to which Perley attends prior to her introduction to mill life:

> Perley listened lazily to the three voices; one sometimes hears very noticeable voices from very unnoticeable people; these were distinct of note as a triplet; idle, soft, and sweet – sweetly, softly idle. . . The triplet rounded into a chord presently, and made her a little sleepy. Sensitive only to an occasional flat or sharp of Brignoli or Kellogg, she fell with half-closed eyes into the luxury of her own thoughts. (16)

Perley's complete attention can be focused on the "sweet" sounds of "soft" conversation because there is no other or louder noise competing for her attention. She has the "luxury" of enjoying her own thoughts and imagines that she "played accompaniments" with the voices, which sound to her as a kind of spoken music.

Like Melville's narrator, who began his journey to the Tartarus unaffected by the machines, Perley Kelso is distinguished for her lack of exposure to the mill noise of Five Falls. In some ways, Perley's ear distances her from her mill-working counterparts as much as her money does. "Upon the cool of her summer rest the hot whir of the thing had never breathed. Factory feet had trodden as lightly as dewdrops upon her early dreams" (Phelps 42). Although her childhood fancies seem to liken the mill workers to fairies, as an adult, Perley hardly considers the mill at all. Thus her initial (mis)perception of the mill town is one of naiveté that recalls her childhood dreams: ". . . the open dam, swift, relentless, and free, mocked at them with peals of hollow laughter; and great puffs and palls of smoke which overhung the distant hum of the little town, made mouths, one fancied, at the shining whiteness of the fields and river bank" (43). The narrator stresses

the "laughter" of the deceptively playful dam, which will by the end of the novel become too "swift," too "free," and will claim Catty's life. In this initial description, the noise of the mill is conflated with the town itself, and remains upon first listen a pleasant "distant hum." The factory, to Perley's eyes in this moment is as jovial as the dam seems to her ear. She "fancied" that the smoke "made mouths" at the "shining whiteness of the fields and river bank;" she creates an anthropomorphic interpretation of the idyllic scene because her mind cannot yet fathom the people whose work it is to burn the mill fires that create the smoke she sees. Not unlike Melville's bachelors, who have neither an inkling of the people who made the paper they write their briefs on, nor the conditions under which they worked, Perley's perspective of the mill is one of comfortable detachment.

During an early conversation with Sip, Perley defines the differences between her own listening preferences and Sip's. As the two begin to reminisce over their first meeting outside the Opera House, Perley notes, "The Opera question, Sip, is one which it takes a cultivated lover of music to understand" (47). She continues with a patronizing manner: "'People are affected by these things very differently. Superior music is purity itself; it clears the air; and only —' Miss Kelso remembered suddenly that she was talking to an ignorant factory girl; a girl who went to the Blue Plum, and had never heard of Mozart. . ." (48). Perley elevates her own ear and tastes to that of connoisseur. She finds pleasure in a notion that the enjoyment of certain music is not a natural phenomenon bestowed upon all listeners, but rather an exclusive privilege that requires "cultivation" — a word that implies, care, training, and "good" breeding. In short, Perley suggests that "Superior music" and its air-cleansing properties are her birthright. Sip demonstrates her acknowledgment of Perley's lofty position by *lifting* "her little brown

face" to Perley's white one. She then declares, "Catty's deaf" and watches "the effect of this" (48). Sip understands from Perley's speech that, if ignorance and an inability to understand "Superior" music is bad, surely a physical inability to hear anything at all is worse.

Perely Kelso's first close encounter with the mill contrasts the initial, distant experience and troubles Perley's developing sense of aural privilege. While walking together, Sip explains to Perley about Catty's disabilities and about how their mother was forced to work through her pregnancy or lose her job altogether saying, "it's all or quit, in general" (53). Perley's response to the things that Sip tells her is one of disbelief: "But such things," said Miss Kelso, rising with a shocked face from the sunny stone, "do not often happen in our New England factories!" (52). Perley has been operating under the illusion that her family's mills, and New England mills at large, are pleasant places to live and work. Indeed, the image in Perley's mind of the mill and its employees seems to mirror the one that Dickens paints in his *Notes* sketch. Soon, Perley and Sip find they have traveled "quite into the town," and must part ways. "Miss Kelso held out her hand to the girl, with a troubled face. The mills were making a great noise and confused her, and she felt that it was of little use to say anything further . . . And so left the sentence unfinished, and bade her good morning instead" (53). Perley seems to admire the "distant hum" of the mills when she hears them from the outskirts of town, but when in close proximity to their "great noise," she becomes "confused." Placed where it is, between two significant ideas, it seems as though the mill noise causes both her "troubled face" and her decision to stop speaking mid-sentence. Perley attempts to understand the mill workers better throughout the novel, but has fallen short thus far, proving instead her

ignorance of her employees and the conditions under which they work; hearing the noise at close proximity for the first time in her life brings her closer to the workers' experience than she has ever been, by allowing her to experience the physical effect that the machine noise can have.

It soon becomes clear in the novel that noise has the power to physically affect those associated with the factory.[37] This is most profoundly observed in Catty:

> "Mother used to say," said Sip, under her breath, "that it was the noise."
>
> "The noise?"
>
> "The noise of the wheels. She said they beat about in her head. She come home o' nights, and says to herself, 'The baby'll never hear in this world unless she hears the wheels.'" (96-7)

The implication is that Sip's mother, who worked in the mills through her pregnancy, presumed that the noise of the mills caused her daughter's deafness. Roughly 130 years after *The Silent Partner* was published, a study would confirm Sip's mother's intuition about the effect that the noise exposure would have on her baby, Catty. Passchier-Vermeer and Passchier (2000) concluded, "Exposure to noise constitutes a health risk" (123). They indicate that research prior to their own had studied the "effects from

[37] Mark M. Smith uses Lucy Larcom as an example of this. She missed the sound of the mill and the progress its noises represented when she was away from it. "When I returned I found that I enjoyed even the familiar, unremitting clatter of the mill, because it indicated that something was going on" (quoted in Smith 140). Larcom indicates surprise by the realization that she has grown to appreciate the mill noise; though, by describing the sound as "unremitting clatter," she suggests that she might not have always perceived it so favorably. Mark M. Smith posits that the sense of longing for noise likely indicated "early stages of sociocusis, tinnitus, or boilermakers' disease. By becoming accustomed to the noise, they underwent physiological and psychological changes. Physiologically they experienced aural fatigue whereby the sensory cells and fibers in their ears were damaged by constant noise" (Smith 140-1).

occupational or environmental noise on reproduction and development" (126). They note, "High-frequency hearing impairment in babies of mothers exposed to high levels of occupational noise during pregnancy is also considered to be a consequence of a mother's stress induced by exposure to noise during pregnancy" (126). The Department of Labor would eventually limit the number of hours an employee could work in noisy industrial plants: "people could work only eight hours in plants that exposed them to 90 decibels and only two hours in areas measuring over 100 decibels. Should these industrial plants expose their workers to higher noise levels than allowed by law, workers had to be provided with ear protectors" (Bronzaft 40).[38] Phelps wrote her novel in order to expose the need for such laws, especially for audiences like Perley who, from positions of privilege, hold misconceptions about factory life. Just as Perley believes that Sip cannot understand "Superior music," without the proper cultivation, Perley cannot understand the mill noise or its detrimental effects until she hears it at close proximity. Perley's soundscape changes in a way she had never previously experienced, and, in changing, it extinguishes her idealized understanding of her father's mill. Phelps hopes that this moment will likewise extinguish for her reader any idealized notions of factory life to which he may be clinging.

[38] To give my reader a sense of contextualization, 70 decibels is the typical "arbitrary base of comparison" when considering different types of noises. "Living room music" might be set at 70 decibels, for example. It is comfortable for most people. 90 decibels is four times as loud as 70 (examples include a power mower or a motorcycle at 25 feet away) and will cause "likely damage" in eight hours of exposure. A steel mill is typically 110 decibels and is at the "average human pain threshold." It is 16 times as loud as 70 decibels and can cause serious hearing damage with prolonged exposure. (From chem.perdue.edu)

Songs at Work: "A hymn, it is not unlikely"

Whereas Thomas Carlyle had the financial means to fend off noise by engineering silence, the financially limited workers in *The Silent Partner*, respond to the noise of the factory with songs, which begin as their acoustic labor but become their means of resistance. In a second-person description of the factory worker's daily routine, the reader, whom the narrator addresses directly as "you" in "The Stone House" chapter, becomes invested in the significance of work songs. The reader discovers "a monotony in the process of breathing hot moisture" and yields a "preference for a wadded coffin" (Phelps 74-75). Eventually, you "cough a little, cough a great deal, lose your balance in a coughing fit, snap a thread and take to swearing roundly. From swearing you take to singing; both perhaps are equal relief, active and diverting" (75). Swearing and singing have similar utilitarian purposes: They offer a preferable replacement for the coughing attack and provide a relieving distraction from mundane work. Yet "There is something curious about that singing of yours" (75). Far from idle pastime, song ultimately engages noise in a battle for primacy. Prior to their entrance into late-nineteenth century fiction about factory workers, work songs were part of a long and significant history that authors like Phelps, wittingly or otherwise, drew upon and contributed to.[39] Developing a method by which to outline the parameters of "work song" can be convoluted. However such definitions are necessary, especially when considering texts like Phelps's that ask the reader to interpret the symbolic elements of the work song.

Richard Crawford's *America's Musical Life* defines work songs based on their

[39] Dorothy Richardson would also use work songs in her factory novel, *The Long Day: The Story of a New York Working Girl* (1905).

functionality: they "help workers fulfill their tasks by pacing their activity, coordinating their movements, and rallying their spirits" (410). Work songs improve both the quality of the labor and morale of the laborer. In "Music at Work," Korczynski suggests that pre-industrial songs and the work to which they were applied "were mutually constituted to a significant degree. . . [The songs] allowed a transport from the material demands of labour while at the same time acknowledging those demands" (Korczynski 330). Work songs associated with non-industrial production have been given much scholarly attention, especially in the US (Pickering 227). Most of the study of non-industrial work songs in the U.S. has, quite appropriately, focused on slave labor and the singing traditions associated with it. In *Work Songs*, Ted Gioia notes the letters of Frederika Bremer, in which she detailed her antebellum travels in the Americas. She seemed to have been especially taken with the singing she heard on her visit to a Virginia tobacco factory, where production at mid-century was primarily manual, and those machines that were used had to be cranked by hand. She describes the slaves singing at their work: "they sung quartettes, choruses and anthems, and that so purely, and in such perfect harmony, and with such exquisite feeling. . ." (Quoted in Gioia 109). She notes the unhealthy conditions of the factory - dirt and lung disease abounded - "but the sound of heavy automation did not yet drown out the singing" (Gioia 109).

Mark M. Smith picks up a similar refrain in his scholarship. He considers work songs from the perspective of the listener, suggesting that slave songs, along with other elements of the soundscape, helped to shape a communal sense of postbellum nostalgia, a sort of idealization to which Bremer contributes even before the war. From the owner's perspective, work songs were generally a welcome sound: "Slave singing in the field was

a sound of industriousness with a built-in rhythm designed to increase productivity" (36).[40] However, even in their singing, slaves were far from free, as masters bent on productivity and capital regulated how songs should be sung: "Whatever the slaves sang, that they sang at a desired tempo was the critical matter for masters. . . Tempo increased productivity and bolstered the slaveholders' aural idiom of the serenity of slavery and the orderliness of southern society, and it reaffirmed to masters the realness of the slave as the 'happy singing subject'" (36). Although Smith focuses on songs from the masters' perspective, it is worth considering Korczynski's words: "Like other tools in this period the songs and the singing voice were self-fashioned or maintained, self-owned, non-standardized, and cherished by their owners" ("Music at Work" 318). Thus, Korczynski's interpretation makes room for singers' agency. Considering this alongside Smith's work, one might note that the "self-ownership" of voice would not necessarily apply to slaves. Yet even in the antebellum context, the individual voice might be heard as a means of distinction and as a source of personal expression, rather than merely useful. We might see this in the typical style of slave work songs, which "encouraged improvisation, especially by the leader" (Crawford 410). Crawford notes that, while many observers of slave singing recorded their general impressions of the songs and their experiences as listeners, few bothered to record words or music in any detail.

Through industrialization, workplace singing transitioned into workplace entertainment. Gioia notes that as industry developed in the late-nineteenth-century, so, too, developed a body of literature on "music, rhythm, and work." Korczynski points out

[40] The slave songs that Smith describes epitomize my definition of "acoustic labor." Although an analysis of slave songs exceeds the parameters of this chapter, I use the insights that Smith, Korcynski, and Crawford offer to consider the implications of work songs at large.

that pre-industrialized work music "was functional in the sense that it was often used as a mode of pacing the labor process." Industrialized labor, on the other hand, was paced by machines, "taking away a major part in the mutually constituted relationship between music and work" (321). Without the benefits of music pacing work that existed in the pre-industrial era, employers became less likely to condone singing in the workplace and often implemented regulations regarding the aural space of the factory. Korczynski notes a famous example from one of Ford's first factories where workers made their own adaptations to new silence regulations by "developing the 'Ford whisper', which involved talking with minimal lip movement (so as to avoid observation by supervisors)" (322). Although changing rules and noisier environments made singing at work more difficult, workers were reluctant to give up entirely the aural traditions that had so long accompanied their labor. In some cases, singing moved from inside factories to outside or else shifted from active music-making to passive listening (Gioia 108). Thus, workers used singing as a means of self-expressive entertainment and insubordination.

Songs in *The Silent Partner* are not geared toward increasing productivity as much as toward allowing workers to gain a temporary sense of control over their circumstances. The scene from *The Silent Partner* that began this section establishes singing as the antidote to swearing and coughing, but the choice and execution of the song suggests that there is more at stake than the singers' comfort.

> You start some little thing with a refrain and a ring to it; a hymn, it is not unlikely; something of a River and of Waiting, and of Toil and Rest . . . but always, it will be noticed, of simple, spotless things, such as will surprise the listener who caught you at your oath of five minutes past. You

> have other songs, neither simple nor spotless, it may be; but you never sing them at your work . . . and the girls lift up their tired faces to catch and keep the chorus in the rival din. (Phelps 75-6)

The narrator suggests a sense of flippancy on the part of the singer with regard to her choice of work song, no more than "some little thing with a refrain and a ring to it." The subject matter, which might vary greatly, seems of little consequence, and the casual, unacquainted listener finds a disconnection between song and singer. The narrator reverses these assumptions, however, with a suggestion that the hymn was specifically selected by the singer over "other songs" in her repertoire. Claudia Stokes suggests in her article, "My Kingdom: Sentimentalism and the Refinement of Hymnody" that Methodist hymns were heard in a variety of contexts outside traditional chapels, including "the workplace, the home, and the street," and thereby carried out the Methodist plan of extending the church beyond the delimited confines of sanctified houses of worship and permeating daily life with Christian piety" (302). Stokes goes on to suggest that, because Methodists and their hymns became associated with "people on the social margins," other denominations were slower to incorporate hymnody into their worship practices (302). With the concluding words of the paragraph, the chapter's narrator reveals the purpose of the song choice. The choice of the hymn encourages other girls, also on the "social margins," to "lift up their tired faces" and participate in the singing. The second-person worker, "you," is a leader among the workers as she initiates their collective singing, yet the song quickly gains its own momentum.

The song serves as "rival" to the "din" of the factory machines, recalling Bremer's visit to the Virginia factory where, despite their ill health, the slaves singing

was still heard over the sound of "heavy automation" (Gioia 109). Through the song, the factory worker participates in something larger than herself, and a kind of sonic battle ensues between heavenly song and hellacious noise. The contest for sonic supremacy is so palpable that the sense of hearing alone no longer suffices for an adequate description. "You like to watch the contest between the chorus and the din; to see - you seem almost to see - the struggle of the melody from alley to alley, from loom to loom, from lifted face to lifted face; to see - for you are very sure you see - the machinery fall into a fit of rage. That is a sight!" (76). The visual language becomes more defined through this passage, as "you . . . seem almost to see" precedes, "you are very sure you see." Finally, if "you" are left with any doubt as to your ability to "see" the sounds engaged in combat, the narrator offers the declarative exclamation, "That is a sight!" The narrator removes all uncertainty that the reader/factory girl might have initially felt, and with the word "is," offers a definition of the unique combination of melodic and clamorous sounds heard in the factory. From a relatively minor diversion, a "contest" that "you like to watch," the description that follows further defines the sight of song and din, this time as a physical, almost Biblical, battle between good and evil.

> …[H]ow that machinery will rage. How it throws its arms about, what fists it can clench, how it shakes at the elbows and knees, what teeth it knows how to gnash, how it writhes and roars, how it clutches at the leaky, strangling gas-lights, and how it bends its impotent black head, always, at last, without fail, and your song sweeps triumphant, like an angel, over it! With this you are very much pleased, though only 'a hand,' to be sure, in Hayle and Kelso. (76)

Through the acoustic labor of her song, the factory girl gains agency. For the first time in the novel, rather than being at the mercy of the machine and the clock and the men who own them, the employee finds that she has procured the upper hand, despite her lowly position within the factory. For the first time, *she* is in control. The reason behind the purposeful decision to sing a hymn over "other songs," becomes clear through this passage. The idea that work songs lift the "morale of the laborer," as Pickering, Robertson, and Korczynski suggest, seems trite against a backdrop of "teeth" that know "how to gnash" and angels that sweep "triumphant" over them. For Phelps, the choice of a "simple, spotless" hymn (75) as work song positions the laborer, and her desire for reasonable working conditions, as good, moral, and right, to the extent of becoming nearly divine, "like an angel" (76). Far from being an "aural testimony to northern progress," (Smith 141), the factory noise, which represents collectively the machines and their owners and overseers, is the opposite: portrayed as evil, immoral, and wrong, to the extent of being nearly demonic as it "writhes and roars" (76).

Despite having "right" on her side, the factory worker's "triumphant" attitude is short lived, and the tragedy of the novel plays out sonically. "Something of the simple spotlessness of the little song is on your face, when you dip into the wind and dusk. . . but it passes; it passes and is gone. . . . You are weak and heart-sick all at once . . . . The pretty song creeps, wounded, back for the engines in the deserted dark to crunch. You are a miserable little factory-girl with a dirty face " (76-7). The transformation that the song allows for is most apparent in the worker's face, the complexion of which changes in a moment from a metaphorical "spotlessness" to a literal "dirty." No longer sweeping passed injustice, the song now "creeps, wounded" back to the machines. It has essentially

given up, and retreats into the jaws of the enemy without resistance, while the worker realizes, or, perhaps, remembers, that the agency she recently obtained through her acoustic labor was at best ephemeral and at worst illusory. The unity of the chorus becomes a "broken chatter" of individual voices, and there is no longer a trace of melody left in them. The narrator notes "your" changed perception of the sounds: "A broken chatter falls in pieces about you; all the melody of the voices that you hear has vanished with the vanquished song; they are hoarse and rough" (77). If we are to imagine that the engines did, indeed, "crunch" the "pretty song," these "hoarse and rough" voices might be the leftover crumbs.

Phelps creates a sympathetic connection between reader and characters by appealing to the reader's presumed Christian faith. In her note that begins the novel, Phelps writes, "Had Christian ingenuity been generally synonymous with the conduct of manufacturing corporations, I should have found no occasion for the writing of this book." Such a statement explicitly links the hymn work song with the kind of Christian behavior that Phelps expects to see exhibited by manufacturers. That she sees, instead, "the abuses of our factory system," suggests that the Christian ideal she hopes for, while, perhaps, present among the "hands" who sing Christian hymns as they work, is absent among those in charge. Thus, the song, representing Christian ideals, is necessarily at odds with the machines, which represent manufacturing corporations and their economic success. To be sure, according to Phelps' note, there are "those intelligent manufacturers who have expended much Christian ingenuity, with much remarkable success, in ameliorating the condition of factory operatives," but this novel is not about them. If it were, the reader might imagine a hymn work song that finds harmony in the noises of the

machines and the image of machine noise might be constructive rather than destructive. Instead, in order to help dispel the "wide-spread ignorance [that] exists among us regarding the abuses of our factory system," she must write about the mill that does not operate under "Christian ingenuity."

In her study, *Women Wage-Earners: Their Past, Their Present, and Their Future* (1893), Helen Campbell outlines the history of factory work in the United States, discusses the present situation, and explores some ideas for future change. She describes early 19th century factory conditions in Lowell as "almost idyllic" compared to those found in England. "The factory was an episode rather than a career; and the buildings themselves were kept as clean as the nature of the work admitted, growing plants filling the windows, and the swift-flowing Merrimac turning the wheels" (79). She notes, further, that employees were set up with bank accounts for their savings. However, she suggests that this was not the case everywhere. In many factories, employees worked twelve to fifteen hours per day, children were beaten, and windows were nailed down, even during the hottest months (80-2). Further, as production and competition among factory owners increased, wages decreased (81). As early as 1831, employees began to organize and resist the conditions that were pressed upon them. Campbell quotes from the first "Report of the Massachusetts Bureau of Labor" (1870), which includes a record of the second organized meeting for resistance held in 1832:

> These evils . . . arise from the moral obliquity of the fastidious, and the cupidity of the avaricious. They consist in an illiberal opinion of the worth and rights of the laboring classes, an unjust estimation of their moral, physical, and intellectual powers, and unwise misapprehension of the

> effects which would result from the cultivation of their minds and the improvement of their condition, and an avaricious propensity to avail of their laborious services, at the lowest possible rate of wages for which they can be induced to work. (Campbell 84)

"These evils," harsh as they were in the U.S., were worse in England, according to Campbell, where "Hideous epidemic diseases, an extinction of any small natural endowment of moral sense, and a daily life far below that of the brutes, had showed themselves as industries and the attendant competition developed" (86). This spurred change in English legislation between the start of the 19th century and its middle. Factories were required to be whitewashed, and the number of windows was regulated. Allotted work time and age of employees was regulated. "For this country such provisions were long delayed" (88). Many early mills were built to alleviate as many stresses and "evils" of the work possible, but many more were built without such considerations. "It is sufficient to say here, that the struggle for factory-workers became more and more severe, and has remained so to the present day" (88). Despite the severity of their struggle, the numbers of working women continued to rise. Whereas in 1860, the census reported that 1,430 women were employed in straw bonnet braiding, and by 1870, the number was 19,998, a rise which represents a general increase in trades available to women after the Civil War (89).

A Massachusetts bureau was developed to investigate the "factory abuses of many orders" and the subsequent "startling increase of pauperism and crime" during the 1860s, and by 1870, its first report was published (Campbell 111). The early reports were descriptive in nature, detailing the "many abuses" of the factories and the "hard lives of

working women as a whole" (112). By 1874, the report included an examination of the home lives of working people, and the 1875 report looked specifically at the "health of working-women," including "the special effects of certain forms of employment upon the health of women" (113). In 1878, the report looked at children workers and moved beyond description by advocating for a half day system for the younger population. In 1881, the report made a "plea for uniform hours" (114). Campbell understood the Boston reports as being representative of New England as a whole based on inquiries conducted in other states through the 1880s. "The agents . . . carried out their work into the lowest and worst places in the cities named, because in such places are to be found women who are struggling for a livelihood in most respectable callings, - living in them as a matter of necessity, since they cannot afford to live otherwise, but leaving them whenever wages are sufficient to admit of change" (125).

It is in this climate of reports that both document the "many abuses" of the factory system and "plea" for changes to it that Phelps sets her scene. Her novel offers descriptions of the factory lives and the home lives of factory employees, at the same time that it pleas to the readership for change. However, distinct from the reports, Phelps' fiction is important because, through such a medium, she can create characters that the reader hopes to see triumphant, as well as issue a warning of the ills that may follow if changes are not made.

The reader is most poignantly and pointedly implicated in Phelps' agenda when the narrator switches from a third-person voice to a second-person. When it is clear that the machine noise has vanquished the song, the narrator suggests that "you" are separate from the other workers, just as "you" were when the song began. "You," alone, seem to

have noticed that the melody is gone, and you, alone, seem to understand the significance of its departure. In a short amount of time, "you" seem to have developed a refined ear, as the commonplace voices of your co-workers now sound "hoarse and rough," "broken," further distinguishing "you" from your fellow employees. The disconnection between the powerful work song and the commonplace workers is emphasized by the lines of dialogue, written in dialect, that follow:

> "Goin' to the dance to-night, Bet?"
>
> "Nynee Mell! yer alway speerin' awa' after some young mon. Can't yer keep yer een at home like a decint lassie?" (77)

The workers' "broken" chatter is made visible to the reader through the printed dialect and serves as a representation of the end of the song's triumph. Significantly, "you" do not take part in the conversation, despite the efforts of the other employees. At the end of the dialogue, the narrator implies that "you" are Sip, or that you are much like Sip, as the focus of the narration shifts in that moment from "you" to Sip. Sip's first words after the factory girls' conversation come as an exchange with Perley. After reading a dialogue that is meant to be as visually striking as it would have been aurally striking, the reader cannot help but note that, though Sip's English may not be as refined as Perley's, it is untainted by the dialects of her co-workers. This suggests that Sip has maintained some of the fight and triumph she felt during the singing of the song, despite her current dejected state. It also suggests that, just as "you"/Sip served as the conduit for transmitting the song to the factory hands, Sip is also well-positioned to be the conduit through which Perley (and the presumably privileged reader) can understand the plight of the factory worker.

The significance of the work song's martyrdom becomes brutally exposed later in the novel when the narrator breaks from Sip and Perley's story in order to follow a young boy, Bub, who works in the factory. "The machinery is making a great noise this morning. The girls are trying to sing, but the engines have got hold of the song, and crunch it well" (212). This time, there is no moment of victory for the melody, and the girls are not singing, but merely "*trying* to sing." Their attempts signify that they have the will, but not the power, to improve their situation. A moment later, "The strain from down stairs struggles and faints as Bub goes in to work; as if the engines had a mouthful of it, and were ready for more" (213). The song no longer seems angelic or triumphant; nor does it willfully creep back to the machines. Instead, in its final described moments in the novel, the hymn work song briefly "struggles" but soon "faints" before the machine noise. If the early description of the hymn melody and the machine noise represents a kind of triumph of good over evil, this is not the kind of Christian narrative that nineteenth-century readers of sentimental novels would have been accustomed to. The hymnic martyrdom does not free the workers from their oppression nor does it seem to serve any other purpose toward a greater good. Rather, it serves to emphasize the hopelessness of the laborers' situation.

Thus, through the interplay of the novel's sounds, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps participates in what Sara Britton Goodling describes as sentimental naturalism. She suggests, "sentimentalism's political project of boundary crossing, its desire to 'effect connections across gender, race, and class' lines (Samuels 6), allows for the introduction of the kinds of monstrous, racialized, lower-class characters who people the landscape of naturalism" (3). Further, "According to naturalist philosophy, human beings are devoid of

free will and are acted upon by powerful forces which they can neither fully understand nor resist. The purpose of a naturalist text is to reveal the workings of these forces by describing, in an unimpassioned, scientific way, their effects upon the novel's characters. But few, if any, novelists actually achieve this ideal" (3-4). Goodling places this idea in conversation with the efforts of sentimental novelists: "Similarly, sentimentalists seem to taint their reformism with an attitude of resignation. . . . Justice, these novels suggest, is found only in the next world. The injustice of this world must simply be endured" (4). I would argue, however, that Phelps offers slightly more than passive resignation on the part of her characters. While Goodling does note the song's significance in the novel, she suggests that "Phelps also portrays the mill machinery as monsters and describes their power not only to silence the mill girls by 'crunching' their songs also to crush the body of a young boy whose clothing gets caught in their 'teeth'" (9). In this statement, Goodling rightly considers that the machinery functions as a "force" in the naturalist sense. However, she fails to consider the idea that the song is more than such a force. Though, as Phelps writes it, the song becomes an entity of its own, it is crucial to remember that it was sent forth to conquer the machine noise by the workers themselves. It is not a force acting on the humanity represented in the novel; rather, it is the sonic representation of that humanity. In most other respects, the mill workers enact the idea that "the injustice of this world must simply be endured" (Goodling 4), but the song's battle suggests that there is an undercurrent of resistance among the workers, or, at least, the desire thereof. Borrowing from Elaine Scarry, Goodling notes that "The mill owners, exercising their class privilege, have developed a discourse that assigns physicality to the lower classes and reserves disembodiment for the wealthy. . . . [D]isembodiment is

associated with power, voice, and control" (10). Yet, the workers' song becomes the same disembodied voice that *should* be inaccessible to them. Though its struggle fails, the song's existence creates a momentary sense of "power, voice, and control" that comes straight from the workers' mouths. Concluding that Phelps ranks among the naturalists because her characters are powerless against the larger forces that work against them misses the point. Indeed, the resistance does fail, but the attempt – even metaphorical – is key. It suggests that the workers and their world, though perhaps not yet in a position to act literally or effectively, are, indeed, on the brink of change. Phelps aims to tip the balance.

Beethoven's Seventh Symphony and Phelps' Reformation Objective

If work songs help the novel's characters combat the noise of their day-to-day lives, and make a shift from acoustic labor toward resistance, Beethoven's music, which weaves in and out of the narrative, complicates the reader's understanding of Phelps' greater political aspirations for the novel. By repeatedly incorporating allusions to Ludwig van Beethoven into her text, Phelps indicates that she had some familiarity with the composer's music and biography, and any reading of the text should account for this. Toward the end of the novel, Perley invites some of the mill workers and her "friends from town" to her home for an evening of music and reading. Perley causes an uproar among the guests when she plays Beethoven on the piano: "It has been said, upon authority, that the next thing which happened was the *Andante* from the Seventh

Symphony, Miss Kelso herself at the keys" (228).[41] Sir George Grove, a Beethoven biographer, whose book *Beethoven and His Nine Symphonies* (1896) was popular on both sides of the Atlantic, devotes an entire chapter of his book to the Seventh Symphony and offers some insight into its performance history:

> [T]he Seventh Symphony, if not written with a view to the French Emperor, was first performed in public on December 8, 1818, in the large hall of the University of Vienna, at a concert undertaken by Maelzel for the benefit of the soldiers wounded at the battle of Hanau, October 30, where the Austrian and Bavarian troops endeavoured to cut off Napoleon's retreat from Leipzig. . . . Much enthusiasm was felt in Vienna on the subject of the concert of December 8, and everyone was ready to lend a helping-hand. (233-4)

The symphony's debut was a benefit concert with political associations: Beethoven, who once revered Napoleon, later used his music to support the men who fought against his tyranny. Phelps' mission with her novel is similar, so it comes as no surprise that she chose this particular symphony for Perley's performance. Phelps wants to raise awareness of the plight of the mill workers and, ultimately, to combat the tyranny of the mill employers and their machines, and she hopes to garner "much enthusiasm" for her cause as well. If we imagine that Phelps was familiar with Beethoven's life and the performance history of his major works, the reader might also imagine that she was

[41] Likely, Perley plays Franz Liszt's transcription of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony, which he wrote for the piano. The piece was first published in 1839, but was revised, republished, and popularized as a full transcribed set of Beethoven's nine symphonies in 1865. Liszt wrote in the preface to this publication, "The name of Beethoven is sacred in art. His symphonies are nowadays universally recognized to be masterpieces. . . . That is why every way of making them widely known and popular has some merit" (Liszt xi).

familiar with associations between this particular piece of music and the composer's efforts to improve the lives of others. Grove suggests that, "everyone was ready to lend a helping-hand." Phelps takes up her pen and creates *The Silent Partner* as her own "helping hand," writing Perley as an example of another set of "helping hands." Perely is the fictional first-hand witness to the "condition of the manufacturing districts" that Phelps was not able to be herself. [42] The novel, then, is Phelps' version of the benefit concert at which the Seventh Symphony debuted. Like Beethoven, she was not in the metaphorical trenches in which the mill workers found themselves, but she is the person willing to use her art to garner awareness and sympathy.

While Phelps' novel is a sort of figurative "benefit concert," Perley's evening of music and recitations acts as a more literal translation of the Seventh Symphony's unveiling. By hosting her society friends and the workers alike, she aims to show her friends the workers' humanity. She wants to demonstrate to herself and to everyone else that she has come far since her earliest encounters with Sip.[43] She hopes to suggest to the workers that she is no longer the typical, haughty society woman, and that she can build a mutual trust between the classes. If this transformation is Perley's "labor" through the novel, then her performance of Beethoven's Seventh becomes her own kind of acoustic labor. Perley more successfully convinces her friend Fly Silver of the mill workers' value as members of the greater community than she does Fly's mother, Mrs. Silver. Through

[42] Although Phelps admits that she did not have first-hand experience with life in the factories, she has "friends who have 'testified that they have seen,'" and for this, she is "deeply in debt for the ribs of my story" (Phelps "Note").
[43] Perley's words again and in full: "Miss Kelso remembered suddenly that she was talking to an ignorant factory-girl; a girl who went to the Blue Plum, and had never heard of Mozart; wondered how she could have made such a blunder; collected her scattered pearls into a hasty change of subject . . ." (48).

such efforts, Perley's character develops into Phelps' idea of the 'proper' Christian, which the mill owners fail to be. "'They have a young preacher there fresh from a seminary, and Perley and the mill-girls will sit in a row together and hear him! Now that *may* be Christianity,' adds Mrs. Silver, in a burst of heroism, 'but *I* call it morbidness, sheer morbidness!'" (Phelps 237). Not only does Perley encourage the mille girls to attend church, but she also sits with them. Mrs. Silver considers this to be the worst affront to Perley's status. Perley views it as an extension of her musical evening at home: as an opportunity to further cultivate the workers.

However, despite Mrs. Silver's supposition that Perley has fallen out of "Society" by her associations with mill workers, Perley repeatedly distinguishes herself from the mill workers with subtle reminders that she will never be one of them, that she can never really "forget her duties to Society" as Mrs. Silver fears (239). In *The Sight of Sound: Music, Representation, and the History of the Body* (1993), Richard Leppert notes, "expensive musical instruments . . . were clear signs of excess wealth. Because they did not 'do' anything except produce sound, they were perfect signs of social position" (8). Further, "to make music well takes much time, yet music made well is nothing – simply air" (Leppert 8). Perley's music, played "well" on such an "expensive musical instrument," reinforces the idea that she is of a different class from her mill-working listeners whose only instruments are their own voices. She has leisure time at home to perfect her playing, while the workers' music is not a way of passing their leisure time, but an attempt at improving their arduous work.

Despite her efforts to the contrary, Perley cannot forget, disguise, or remove the class distinctions that separate her from the mill workers. Perley notes to her friend, Miss

Van Doozle, that she treats "these people precisely as I treat you" (227). By referring to them repeatedly as "these people," however, she unwittingly suggests that, though she may treat them the same, she still categorizes them differently, which correspondingly alters the intention that drives the treatment. Perley sees herself as offering the workers' sole way of rising above the conduct of their station. Fly suggests to Perley that the mill workers must be "on their best behavior" at the party. Perley responds, smiling, "One does not behave till one has a chance" (226). Perley offers that chance and, in doing so, suggests that the workers' usual behavior lacks an element of refinement. Thus, Perley views herself not merely as a fellow Christian helper among the masses, but as a kind of social savior, seeking to improve their degraded manners in addition to their degraded working environment.[44] However, in speaking about the thirty mill workers in attendance at the party, the narrator notes, "The same faces at their looms to-morrow you could not identify" (226). Such a statement implies that any changes and "improvements" in the workers are a direct result of Perley's efforts with her "benefit concert" and not the product of the workers' own inclinations; the mill workers will return to their true nature once they are no longer in her company. To Phelps, such impermanent transformation might suggest that there is more work to be done, and that the workers cannot hope to be counted among the worthy members of "Society" until they are treated as such in every aspect of their lives: work, church, and community alike.

Significantly, for my interpretation of the novel's musical scene, "The *Andante*" is a misnomer, which has implications that further complicate the reader's understanding

[44] The idea of Perley as "godly" figure is further emphasized later in the novel: Mr. Garrick's "Hand had but brushed the hem of her garment, but it trembled visibly. He touched a priestess in a water-proof. Fire from heaven fell before his eyes upon the yellow boiler" (254).

of Perley's relationship to the workers. Beethoven broke from traditional symphonic form in marking his second movement as *Allegretto*, instead of "the usual *Andante* or *Larghetto*" (Grove 239). Thus we learn that, while Phelps's narrator was familiar with the form of symphonies in general, she misses the mark with Beethoven's Seventh. The distinction may simply have been an error on Phelps' part, but it is more intriguing to consider the implications of an intentional use of "*Andante*" in *The Silent Partner* over "*Allegretto*." If the reader continues to imagine that Phelps was familiar with Beethoven's work, she must also assume that the inaccuracy was deliberate. Literally, the *andante* tempo means "at a walking pace," a tempo that implies movement, but does not allow for too much movement. It is quick, but still closer in tempo range to the slowest tempi (*Larghissimo*, *Grave*) than it is to the quickest (*Presto*, *Prestissimo*). The text states, "the next thing which happened was the *Andante* from the Seventh Symphony, Miss Kelso herself at the keys" (228). The *Andante* occurs at the gathering, as though it exists as an entity on its own; it "happens" to the partygoers. The end of the sentence, however, indicates that Perley has some measure of control "at the keys," like a puppet master pulling strings. With that, the *Andante* shifts from independent incident and becomes, instead, dependent on her for its existence. Just so, the mill workers are a vague and independent group to Perley prior to her first encounter with Sip. Once she infuses herself in their lives, however, she takes over "at the keys," so to speak. Perley encourages the workers to metaphorically walk toward something better, and she coaxes them toward her version of improvement. At the party, she performs the "*Andante*," the "walking" movement, for the mill workers, despite her friend's insistence that "The people *cannot* appreciate Beethoven" (229). Contrarily, Perley seems to maintain that

they can and must appreciate it.

However, though Perley demonstrates concern over their plight through the majority of the novel and positions herself as an advocate, she talks them out of their strike when they ban together to make changes for themselves, reprimanding them for wanting to improve their wages. Sip recalls Perley's speech: "Then she blazed out at us. . . . [S]he talks to us about the trouble that the Company was in, and a foolishness creeps round amongst us, as if we wished we were at home" (Phelps 251-2). Perley uses her economic privilege and the rapport she has developed with the workers against them and in favor of the company that has harmed so many. Other scholars have pondered over this scene. Mari Jo Buhle and Florence Howe write in the afterward to the 1983 edition of the novel, "And perhaps most problematic of all: Perley's ability to foreclose the strike near the novel's end – is that not a sign of the limited political vision of the young novelist? Perhaps" (378). Judith Fetterley suggests that "To invoke class privilege in the silencing of others makes Perley complicit in her own silencing. Not surprisingly, then, we find Perley in this scene advocating her own silence" (29). Jill Bergman takes a new approach to the scene, declaring it to be a feminist rewriting of Gaskell's similar scene in *North and South* (Bergman 159). "Perley proves that she does indeed understand her business and knows how to protect her financial interest. In short, this scene demonstrates Perley's business savvy far more than her sympathy with the workers" (160), and she describes the novel's "central concern" as "women's place in business" (161), rather than "the abuses of our factory system" that Phelps describes in the Note that introduces her novel. I contend that, while Bergman is too apologetic, as demonstrated in the way she adjusts the focus of the novel to reframe Perley's character, critics of the 1980s may have been

too harsh.

Perley's behavior is an expression of her socioeconomic status. As Bergman phrases it, "She scolds the workers as a mother might scold naughty children" (159). Bergman does not say more about this but, rather, lets Perley off the hook by refraining from further discussion. However, I find it significant that Perley treats the mill workers as though she is in a position to reprimand them. If we read Perley's performance of an intentionally misnamed *Andante* as a call to action, the recital predicts Perley's otherwise unexpected act. "Walk," Perley seems to tell the workers with her performance of the misnamed *Andante*, "*but* don't move too quickly or too loudly." Bergman describes Phelps' mother (also a well-known writer) at the end of her life: "She eventually returned to her writing, but she had come to the conclusion – and probably tried to pass this value on to her daughter – that to be useful, she must put the care of others before her own needs and fulfillment" (153). Likewise, In her autobiography, *Chapters from a Life*, Phelps writes about her own mother:

> Now she is a popular writer, incredulous of her first success, with her future flashing before her; and now she is a tired, tender mother, crooning to a sick child, while the MS. lies unprinted on the table, and the publishers are wishing their professor's wife were a free woman, childless and solitary, able to send copy as fast as it is wanted. The struggle killed her, but she fought till she fell. (14-15)

Phelps uses her impression of her mother's life as a cautionary tale as she constructs Perley's character. For the sake of her "children," or, rather, for the sake of the workers whom she scolds and directs as though they were her children, Perley refuses an offer of

marriage: "Possible wifehood was no longer an alluring dream. Only its prosaic and undesirable aspects presented themselves to her mind" (261). In this way, Phelps writes Perley as her own ideal woman: the woman whose "needs and fulfillment" come through the usefulness of putting "the care of others" before the care of herself. She tells Garrick, coldly, "I do not need you now. Women talk of loneliness. I am not lonely. They are sick and homeless. I am neither. They are miserable, I am happy. They grow old. I am not afraid of growing old. They have nothing to do. If I had ten lives, I could fill them! No, I do not need you, Stephen Garrick" (261-2). [45] Completely fulfilled by her work, Perley hardly makes any sacrifice at all in rejecting marriage and family, and she will never have to face the "struggle" of prioritizing both work and family, which Phelps believed killed her mother. In a way, Perely finds her own sort of *andante*, as she walks away from the life that everyone around her, including herself, always imagined she would have. Although Perley seems to represent Phelps' ideal woman, in discouraging the strike, she is not the kind of reformer that the reader, or, indeed the workers themselves, expect. Phelps speaks directly to the reader in the Note at the beginning of the novel, asking for the reader's help to change the system. Through Perley's character, who falls short in her efforts to change the system, Phelps indicates to the reader that the work is not over; the goals have not been achieved. Perley offers a beginning, but she is not the complete solution. The reader must understand Perley's limitations and improve on her efforts toward reform.

[45] Phelps' narrator repeatedly refers to Garrick generically as "the man" or "a man" in this scene: Perley Kelso, with a curious, slow gesture, stretched her arms out toward them, with a face which a man would remember to his dying day" and "'I shall wait for you,' said the man" (262, 263). Although it is Garrick who proposes to Perley in this scene, the repeated use of common noun, rather than proper, indicates that, by rejecting Garrick, Perley rejects every man.

Moving beyond the movement's tempo marking, the music itself has interpretive implications for *The Silent Partner* as well. I am willing to imagine that Phelps, or anyone who has given the Seventh Symphony more than a cursory listen, would notice its striking rhythmic drive. Indeed, a glance at the sheet music for the second movement reveals that hardly a bar goes by in which the central rhythmic phrase – which consists of a quarter note, two eighth notes, followed by a quarter note or a quarter rest (see figures 2 and 3) is not repeated in one of the orchestral voices.

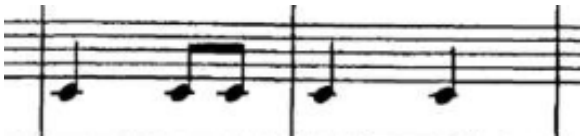

Figure 2. Ludwig von Beethoven; Seventh Symphony; PMLPO1600-Beethoven Werke Breitkopf Serie 1 No 7 Op 92. 1811-1812. Web. Impsl.org. May 2015.

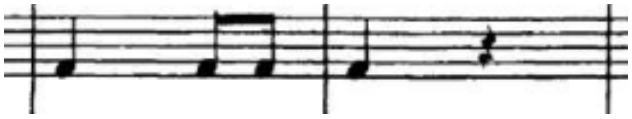

Figure 3. Ludwig von Beethoven; Seventh Symphony; PMLPO1600-Beethoven Werke Breitkopf Serie 1 No 7 Op 92. 1811-1812. Web. Impsl.org. May 2015.

Even when the ear is drawn toward the lyrical melody of the A-major sections, the bass and cello maintain the rhythm through a gentle pizzicato. Grove writes, "[I]t is enough to say that the [Seventh] Symphony is throughout perhaps more markedly rhythmical than

any other of the nine. . .” (244-5). I am not in a position to either confirm or deny Grove’s statement that the Seventh Symphony is unequivocally the *most* “rhythmical” of the symphonies, though it is, undeniably, rhythmic.[46] I posit that it was because of its rhythmic qualities that Phelps chose to reference the Seventh Symphony, above any other piece of classical music that was popular among upper class young ladies at the time.

In its incessant repetition of sound, the rhythmic drive of the music mimics the sound of the machines and serves as a reminder of what the narrator calls the “great noise” of the mills. In the music, the pulse comes in and out of the listener’s consciousness, despite being an ever-present part of the movement. Likewise, the factory noise, which startles and confuses Perley early in the novel, moves in and out of the reader’s consciousness at the narrator’s discretion, despite being a permanent part of the novel’s soundscape. Such a musical reference in the novel might remind readers of Sip’s words to Perley: “when there’s noises in the world like the engines of ten thousand factories let loose. You can’t keep still. You run about. You’re in and out. You’ve got so used to a noise. You feel as if you were part and parcel of it. I do” (117). The rhythm driving the Seventh Symphony, likewise, becomes “part and parcel” of the music and of the listener’s experience of it. Though a listener of the Seventh Symphony might be sitting in her chair, the rhythm creates a feeling of continual movement reminiscent of Sip’s inability to “keep still” when she hears certain repetitive “noises in the world”

[46] A 2006 program note from The Philadelphia Orchestra Association offers the same observation about the Symphony’s rhythmic qualities: “The Symphony’s dance elements, vitality, and sense of celebration are conveyed principally through rhythm. It is not the melodies that are so striking and memorable as the general sense of forward movement. (At times there is no melody at all, but simply the repetition of a single pitch.) . . . The famous A-minor Allegretto is framed by the same unstable chord to open and close the movement. The form is ABABA with the opening section using a theme that is once again more distinctive for its rhythmic profile than for its melody” (quoted at npr.org http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5481664).

(117). That Perley selects such a piece to play for the mill workers further speaks to her limitations as their champion. Although she moves between worlds, befriending Sip, while maintaining ties with Fly Silver, the greater part of Perley inhabits the world of the workers' oppression, the world in which she is a silent partner in Hayle and Kelso Mills. She is part owner of the mill, and an echo of the noise of its machines emanates from her fingers, even while she tries to aid in the plight of its workers. In this way, her music helps the machines to undermine the songs that the workers raise.

The rhythmic noise of the mill machines inhabits Catty's body as the only sound in her existence. Like a human phonograph, she houses the din within herself and becomes a living record of it and its power. However, like the author of *The Saturday Review* article, Catty appreciates noise in a way that the other workers cannot. At the end of the novel, during the night, "The wind was high and blew a kind of froth of noise in gusts against the closed windows and doors" amidst the "booming of the flood" (266). Although Sip is confounded by the strength of the storm, "It was a night that Catty could hear, or thought she could, and this pleased her. 'It is like wheels,' she said, having never heard but those two things, the machinery in the mills and this thunder. It carried her round and round, she signified, making circles with her fingers in the air" (267). The storm's noise sounds identical to Catty as that of the mills, and it disorients her as she tries to find her sister:

> The noise like wheels was plain to her. It waited for her outside of that door. It struck like claws upon her locked ears. . . . Suddenly it occurred to her that she might go and find Sip. But sip would not be in the noise. Where would she be? . . . At this side of the house she lost, or thought she

> lost, the noise. It must be at this side of the house that she should find Sip. (273-4)

Sip discovers Catty on the precipice of her death. “She’s making signs to me. She’s making signs to call my name!” (278). Unlike the voices of the mill workers, which leave their bodies to combat the noise around them, Phelps depicts Catty’s voice as silent, as trapped in a corporeal prison. She stands on the bridge above the floodwaters, “not twelve feet from the sunken piers,” with “long, outstretching hands” (277).

This image of Catty waving her arms over the turmoil below recalls to the reader’s mind another image in the novel, Perley’s picture of Lemude’s “Ludwig van Beethoven Dreaming at the Keyboard” (see figure 4).

Figure 4. Lemude, Carl; "Ludwig van Beethoven Dreaming at the Keyboard"; allposters.com; Web; May 2015

Sip and Perley engage in a lengthy discussion about the image.

> "What is that fellow doing?" she asked, after a while, - "him with the stick in his hand."
>
> She pointed to the leader of the shadowy orchestra, touching the *baton* through the glass with her brown finger.
>
> "I have always supposed," said Perley, "that he was only floating with the rest; you see the orchestra behind him."
>
> "Floating after those women with their arms up? No, he is n't!"
>
> "What is he doing?"
>
> "It's riding over him, - the orchestra. He can't master it. Don't you see? It sweeps him along. He can't help himself. They come and come. How fast they come! How he fights and falls! [. . .] I'd keep your pretty things if I was you. It ain't that there should n't be music anywhere. It's only that the music should n't ride over the master. Seems to me it is like that." (129-30)

Perley's placid interpretation tells the reader more about her position than it reveals about the image. In her reading, the conductor is "floating," but that does not trouble her because everyone else is "only floating," too. Perley has enjoyed the luxury of "floating" through her life: attending operas, sitting warm and idle in her room when it rains, turning down marriage proposals. Until she met Sip, she had only known other people whose lives were also filled with so much ease. Sip, offended by such an explanation contradicts, "No, he is n't!" Sip's reading is much more violent; in hers, the master

"fights and falls" against the music that comes at him. Sip's analysis, like Perley's, reveals much about her own life, but her words invite the reader to draw a parallel between the image and the workers' song, which "fights and falls" against the noise of the mill machines. If Beethoven's Seventh Symphony resonates with the rhythmic sounds of the factory, then the parallels between image and text are even more striking. "How fast they come! How he fights and falls!" could describe one of the mill workers, striving to meet her quota and sending her voice up at the end of the day in a fruitless effort to battle the noise of the machine. "It ain't that there should n't be music anywhere. It's only that the music should n't ride over the master." In the work song scene, the "music" of the machines "rides over" the women workers who operate them, just as Beethoven's music in the picture, which a reader of the novel might imagine to be a performance of the second movement of the Seventh Symphony, "rides over" the conductor who directs it.

In *The Silent Partner*, sound is never idle nor incidental, and it is very often associated with power or struggle. Richard Leppert writes, "[T]he sounds of the upper classes are associated with a high degree of order, registered visually as physical self-control, as in the case of Molenaer's painting, one among many similar representations" (9). Even when contextualized in what should be a controlled, ordered environment – through composer (author of the sound), conductor (harnesser of the sound), and orchestra (producer of the sound) – Phelps chooses to incorporate into her novel a painting that illustrates the opposite: a complete lack of mastery, even on the part of the master, himself.

Perley hangs the sketch up in Sip and Catty's house, a suggestion that she wants

to give the women another point of access into her class culture. However, the image of Beethoven is more closely aligned with images of anarchy that represent the music of the lower classes, than those of Perley's own class, which, by contrast, "are associated with a high degree of order, registered visually as physical self-control" (Leppert 9). While Perley's playing of Beethoven on the piano serves to emphasize her differences from the workers, the "Dreaming Beethoven" destabilizes those established differences. Pictured is a man who began to lose his hearing in his late-twenties. He composed the symphony that Perley plays on the piano (228), with his ear pressed against his own instrument, and reportedly conducted orchestras with an ear horn strapped to his head. Grove summarizes the famous anecdote best:

> The master, though placed in the midst of this confluence of music, heard nothing of it at all and was not even sensible of the applause of the audience at the end of his great work, but continued standing with his back to the audience, *and beating the time*, till Fraulein Ungher, who had sung the contralto part, turned him, or induced him to turn round and face the people, who were still clapping their hands, and giving way to the greatest demonstrations of pleasure. (335)

Lemude might have considered this moment when he put pencil to paper for "Dreaming at the Keyboard": the conductor in the image beats the time, but the music exceeds him. Thus, it is not only their deafness that links Catty and Beethoven, but also their unsuccessful attempts to control the sounds that, more accurately, control them. Sip's description of the picture also reflects the image of Catty being "swept along" by the storm waters. Neither can she "help herself. They come and come," and she is ultimately

lost to them, as Sip supposes the "master" is lost to his music. Sip's friend Dirk sees the picture hanging on Sip's wall and makes his own interpretations: "'It looks like Judgment Day,' said Dirk, looking over Catty's head at the plunging dream and the solitary dreamer" (151). Whereas the noise of wheels and flood "carried [Catty] round and round," while she "made circles with her fingers in the air," the personified music of the orchestra in the sketch similarly "sweeps [the conductor] along. He can't help himself." Ultimately, the reader-viewer might imagine the conductor to be swept *away*, not merely "along," as he "fights and falls" while waving his baton, just as Catty was swept away in the flood waters, her "long, outstretching hands" making "signs to call [Sip's] name" (267, 278). Indeed, the flood creates a personal "Judgment Day" for Catty.

Phelps, like Campbell, documented the sights, sounds, and stories coming out of factories of her day. In both cases, the text was meant to be a tool to instigate change. While Phelps' work reflects a single moment, out of which, she hopes, change might be born, the nature of Campbell's work allows her to document a shift in women's wages and the ways in which they are able to earn them. Between 1886 and 1892, for example, New York State passed a series of laws and amendments to labor regulations, which she includes in the book's appendix. The laws included provisions for time spent working each week (no more than 60 hours per week or 10 hours per day, after 9:00 PM or before 6:00 AM, for any "person under eighteen years of age and no woman under twenty-one years of age. . ."), age of employees ("No child under fourteen years of age shall be employed in any manufacturing establishment within this state"), safety, reporting accidents, lunch breaks ("Not less than sixty minutes shall be allowed for the noonday meal"), adequate space ("Not less than two hundred and fifty cubic feet of air space shall

be allowed for each person in any workroom . . ."), and there were consequences for violators ("Any person who violates or omits to comply with any of the provisions of this act . . . shall be punished by a fine . . ."). Through their texts' factory diegeses, Phelps and Campbell each contributed to the many literal and textual voices that helped to improve the factory system and the lives of its workers. Though the goals of the texts might be similar, an important distinction lies in the way that the novelist uses sound descriptions to garner attention and prove her points.

Through their fiction, both Herman Melville and Elizabeth Stuart Phelps explore the noises of factory machines and the silences and sounds with which their characters respond. In each case, the noise of the machines defines the space in which it is heard, and both authors seek to make the reader aware of the abuses concealed within those spaces. Machine noises in these contexts also serve as the representation of a larger, systemic, patriarchal power. In each text, the noise, like the system it represents, is masculinized as it penetrates the ears of female workers. In each instance, tied in with the characters' work is a sense of what I term their acoustic labor, or the acoustic profile that workers create during, or in response to, their labor. While Melville's workers respond with meaningful silences (both chosen and imposed), Phelps's characters respond with music. Though the workers lift their voices as a call to arms against the noises and abuses of the factory, Perley demonstrates through her playing of Beethoven on the piano that she can never fully give up her class position or her loyalty to the factory that she inherited, despite her efforts toward improving the workers' lives. Both Melville and Phelps demonstrate to his and her readers, respectively, that there is a class of people living near or among them that is being grievously treated. While it is up to the reader to

decide if Melville intends for any further action by the reader, Phelps takes a more direct approach, asking the reader to do the work that Perley is not able to complete. Although Charles Dickens managed to write about his visit to a factory without including any aural details, Melville and Phelps rely on such details in order to enhance the reader experience and lend interpretive power to their fiction.

CHAPTER 3

"A VAGUE NOTE OF TERROR": FRANK NORRIS AND THE SOUND OF IMPERIALISM

Frank Norris's *The Octopus* (1901) visually conceptualizes the railroad as an enormous, silent "leviathan with a heart of steel" (452), spreading its tentacles across the country. The sound of the locomotive in the text, however, affects characters and readers even more profoundly than the image alone does. Near the novel's beginning, while he is walking across the ranchlands, the poet Presley becomes an ear-witness to the train's slaughter of Vanamee's sheep. He flees the scene of carnage, "almost running," and covers his ears, until the sound of the locomotive once again breaks the "profound" silence of the ranch: "the symbol of a vast power, huge, terrible, flinging the echo of its thunder over all the ranches of the valley, leaving blood and destruction in its path; the leviathan, with tentacles of steel clutching into the soil, the soulless Force, the iron-hearted Power, the monster, the Colossus, the Octopus" (Norris 45). At the textual level, as the train departs and the narrator describes its characteristics – beginning with "tentacles of steel" – the reader can almost "hear" the fading noise if she reads the passage aloud. It consists of a series of "s" sounds punctuated by hard consonants: "with *t*en*t*acle*s* of *st*eel *c*lu*tch*ing in*t*o the *s*oil, the *s*oulle*ss* For*c*e . . . the *C*olo*ss*u*s*, the O*ct*opu*s*." The passage is rhythmic, with its syllabic groups of four in each prepositional phrase and subsequent appellations, reminiscent of the "chugga-chugga " onomatopoeia that children attribute to trains. Through this extract the noise, which Presley attempts to silence by covering his ears, hurls "the echo of its thunder" across the reader's sonic space as well. Norris demonstrates the ubiquity of the locomotive's empire across both

geographic and acoustic space as it expands beyond the textual world and into the real world. In this way, beginning very early in the novel, Norris asks that his readers listen, and likewise promises to give them something to listen to.

Near the end of *The Octopus*, Shelgrim, president of the railroad company, asserts that the wheat and the railroad are two uncontrollable forces, almost natural in size and movement: "You are dealing with forces, young man, when you speak of Wheat and the Railroads, not with men. . . . Blame conditions, not men" (451). Shelgrim thus establishes a dichotomy between Wheat and Rail, which the characters of the novel seem to uphold throughout. However, despite the booming cacophony emitted from the train and the wheat harvester, which arrogantly forces its way into the ears of the characters, the noises of the novel are subdued in the Mission garden. This space disrupts the presumed duality of the narrative's universe, yet ultimately adheres to Norris's own definition of Naturalism from 1896: "Everything is extraordinary, imaginative, grotesque even, with a vague note of terror quivering throughout . . ." Naturalism is "tragic" and "a school by itself, unique somber, powerful beyond words" (*Apprenticeship v. 1* 86-87). In presenting the mission sounds, Norris invites a challenge to R. Murray Schafer's "sound imperialism" as he reveals sounds that should be termed "imperial" but that are audited across vast amounts of time, rather than across space alone. As a way of understanding and discussing this idea, I offer the term "acoustic time." When a train's whistle blows, the sound might be audited for six or ten seconds. But what if the sound were heard (continuously or sporadically) over a longer period of time: hours, days, years, or centuries? Then it can no longer be said to dominate acoustic space alone, as Shafer's sound imperialism suggests, but also acoustic time, becoming part of the historical sonic

experience of the space that it occupies. The ancient imperial sounds of the mission, its bell and fountain, juxtaposed with the industrial imperial sounds of the ranchlands, allows readers to imagine a repetitive or cyclical, rather than linear, notion of history in the novel.

Furthermore, the narrative lacks descriptions of noise in the big city, where the reader is likely to anticipate them. I read this absence in terms of noise abatement campaigns, which began in North America and Europe in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries in response to rapidly changing soundscapes. Considered through this cultural timbre, the comparatively silent city suggests a seeming utopia of the wealthy ruling class. Finally, and perhaps unexpectedly in a novel about "forces" of immensity and power, Norris provides a character, Presley, who controls his sonic environment with repeated and sustained attempts to *listen* and to persuade others to do the same. Although Presley's failures as a listener are numerous, he ultimately reveals a sense of perseverance and autonomy despite the forces that deafen his ear. Thus, this essay offers a beginning. I hope to bring some awareness to the intricacies of aurality in *The Octopus*, which I consider necessary to a thorough understanding of the narrative, the characters, and Norris's portrayal of the historical moment.

In an essay published in 1903, Frank Norris advises future novelists to " . . . learn to sit very quiet, and be very watchful, and so train your eyes and ears that every sound and every sight shall be significant to you and shall supply all the deficiency in the absence of text-books" (*Responsibilities* 207). While critics and biographers alike have examined Norris's understanding of the visual arts at great length, few have considered the use of sound in his fiction. Mark Mitchell and Joseph McElrath posit that such

scholars have failed to seriously consider that Norris had any formal understanding of music, or that it might have played a role in his novels ("Frank Norris' *The Pit*" 161). A focus on music alone, however, limits the reader's understanding of the broader functions of sound in Norris's work. Martha Dimes Toher suggests that for Norris, "sound [broadly speaking], of all the senses came closest to expressing life" ("The Music of the Spheres" 168). Nick Yablon seems to be sympathetic to both of these notions as he explores musical and other sounds of the opera house and city as they appear in Norris's *The Pit* (1903).[47] Contributing to these conversations about aurality in Norris's work, this chapter draws from Raymond Murray Schafer's definition of "sound imperialism," in order to explore Norris's use of sound as a means of representing "The westward-moving course of empire," which the author describes as neither peaceful nor "yet finished" (*Responsibilities* 59, 32). [48] In his essay, "A Neglected Epic," Norris writes, "suddenly we have found that there is no longer any frontier. The westward-moving course of empire has at last crossed the Pacific Ocean. . . . The thing has not been accomplished peacefully" (*Responsibilities* 59). The cargo ship at the end of *The Octopus*, which points westward, bound for the Far East, reflects Norris's understanding of the continuation of the U.S. imperial project beyond the boundaries of what was once the western frontier: "For years we have been sending our wheat from East to West, from California to Europe. But the time will come when we must send it from West to East. We must march with the course of empire, not against it" (241). Yet throughout *The Octopus*, the most

[47] See Nick Yablon, "Echoes of the City: Spacing Sound, Sounding Space, 1888-1916," *American Literary History* (June 2007), 629-660. For an analysis of noise in Norris's *McTeague*, see Philipp Schweighauser, "The Soundscapes of *Naturalism*," *The Noises of American Literature, 1890-1985: Toward a History of Literary Acoustics* (2006).

[48] For further discussion of Norris' fiction and imperialism, see Heinz Ickstadt, "The Rhetoric of Expansionism in Painting and Fiction (1880-1910)," *American Empire: Expansionist Cultures and Policies, 1881-1917* (1990), 9-29.

frequently cited symbol of empire is not the ship at the end of the novel, but the railroad.

At Mussel Slough in 1880, a gunfight broke out between representatives of the Southern Pacific Railroad and farmers of the San Joaquin Valley.[49] *The Octopus*, the first book of what was to be his three-part Epic of Wheat, is Norris's fictionalization of this event. In the novel, Presley is staying on Los Muertos ranch, owned by Magnus Derrick (to whom all the ranchers look for advice and sound decision-making). Presley is on the ranch seeking inspiration for his epic poem, a "mighty song, the Song of the West" (Norris *Octopus* 14). During Presley's stay, Derrick and the other wheat growers repeatedly rise up against S. Behrman, spokesperson for the railroad, who, with his boss Shelgrim, wants to take possession of the ranchland in order to expand the railroad. The novel climaxes with a gunfight over the disputed land, after which the reader is given glimpses of its effects: a wife and daughter are left homeless and starving, Magnus Derrick grows feeble in mind and body, and S. Behrman is killed in a ship's wheat hold. Alongside the fast paced narrative of Wheat and Railroad, Norris offers moments in the mission garden, which seems of a different place and time than the story proper. The characters that most often appear in this location are the sheepherder, Vanamee, and the mission priest of questionable virtue, Father Sarria.[50] It is here that the author offers glimpses of a romanticized Spanish colonial past and explores the realm of the mystical.

[49] For more, see Terry Beers, *Gunfight at Mussel Slough: Evolution of a Western Myth* (2004).

[50] Although the priest seems amiable enough toward the other characters, Norris portrays him as a hypocritical man, one who carries "in one hand the vessels of the Holy Communion and in the other a basket of game cocks" (166).

"But the sound!": Listening to Musical and Locomotive Machines

In January 1897, while working as a journalist, Norris wrote an article for *The Wave* titled "Inside an Organ," in which he climbed into an organ while the organist, Mr. Eddy, played. It seems that in Norris's mind, the sounds of the organ and the sounds of the train have a significant degree of likeness. Both machines clearly have the capability for high volume. Norris, however, describes the unlikely pair as sharing other sonic characteristics as well. He begins by describing the parts of the organ in detail, emphatically agreeing with Mr. Eddy's description of the organ: "It is music just to look at it" (*Apprenticeship v.1* 220). He proceeds to describe what, after gazing on the pipes, he imagines might issue from them. Upon entering the organ for the first time, his descriptions become at once more specific and more approximated:

> But the sound! It was not music in the general acceptance of the word, for the multitude of notes crowded together in that narrow space fought each other as they struggled to escape. . . . It was - I cannot say what it most resembled. It was the vast vague roll of the ocean, or the clamor of a great wind in a forest, or the voices of a multitude shouting together, or the snarling of a thousand trumpets. (221)

In each description of the organ, the author seems to say that its sound is all of these, at the same time that he recognizes his inability to "say what it most resembled." Norris, writing in a time when the written word was no longer the only, or most accurate, way to record sound, seems to be hyper aware of the difficulty of achieving descriptive precision regarding the organ's sound. His words, however, reveal that he *does* know what the organ most resembles - if not in musical virtuosity, then in sheer acoustic intensity.

Norris continues to listen from the belly of the organ, while its sound increases in volume. "Suddenly the bourdon began, the open diapason, the vast thunder of that lowest octave of the great pedal-organ. Everything shook, wood, iron, and all quivered as the quaking of the earth. It was the thunder of artillery, the bellowing of a tremendous surge, the prolonged crashing of a Niagara, terrific beyond words" (*Apprenticeship v. 1* 221). The vastness of the organ's sound, combined with the images of "wood [and] iron," which "all quivered as the quaking of the earth" are reminiscent of Presley's first encounter with the train at the beginning of the novel. Presley feels "the shock of the irruption while the earth was still vibrating. . . . [I]t roared with a hollow diapason" (*Octopus* 44). Whereas in the first description, Norris likens the organ to the train, in the second, he likens the train to the organ with its "hollow diapason." As the organ piece ends, Norris describes the waning sound: "Then in a moment it began to subside, just as a storm might pass off, the thunder getting further and further below the horizon, the wind dropping away by long puffs. . . . The bourdon sank to a numb vibration, so low as to be no longer sound, but a mere indefinable tremble in the air. . . . Then it stopped" (*Apprenticeship v.1* 222). Norris portrays the *stationary* organ in terms of a storm's *movement*. Such a description that denotes sonic mobility seems more appropriate for the locomotive than the pipe organ. Indeed the music's stormy "indefinable tremble" and "thunder" recalls the "vibrating" earth that Presley felt as the train passed him and the subsequent "thunder abruptly diminishing to a subdued and distant humming" (*Octopus* 44). Once again, Norris seems to make the sounds of each machine interchangeable. Then, as in the description of the organ's sound, which also "stopped" abruptly, "All at once this ceased."

I present these two sound illustrations as a way of demonstrating Norris's conception of high volume sound: that it is not stationary, even when its source is, but rather moves toward complete envelopment of the listener, in disregard of his or her desire to hear it. For Norris, such sound is an inexorable force like wind, water, or storm – an understanding that complies perfectly with his own definition of literary Naturalism: "Everything is extraordinary, imaginative, grotesque even, with a vague note of terror quivering throughout like the vibration of an ominous and low-pitched diapason" (*Apprenticeship v.1* 86). It is no accident that Norris chooses high volume sound as a way of conceptualizing the "vastness," "monstrosity," and "tragedy" that distinguishes Naturalism from Realism's "dramas of the reception-room" and "crises involving cups of tea" (Norris *Apprenticeship v. 1* 85). Indeed, extreme feats of architecture, technology, and will must be managed in order to avoid sound. The Naturalist novel adheres to this concept in that it is not as much about individuals who do enormous and terrible things, as it is about enormous and terrible things that happen to individuals (Norris *Apprenticeship v. 1* 86). High volume sound, likewise, happens to individuals. As the old argument goes, "The sense of hearing cannot be closed off at will. There are no earlids" (Schafer 11). In *The Soundscape* (1977, 1994), R. Murray Schafer terms the powerful movement of noise, "sound imperialism." As Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri suggest, "imperialism's project [is] always to spread its power linearly in closed spaces and invade, destroy, and subsume subject countries within its sovereignty" (182). Schafer interprets high-volume sound in a similar way: it forcibly "dominates," "invades," and "subsumes" the soundscape.

Clearly sound alone can never literally be, as Hardt and Negri suggest about

imperialism, "designed for conquest, pillage, genocide, colonization, and slavery," (Hardt 166-7), though it can represent, define, suggest, or promote any or all of these things.[51] Schafer understands noise as a symbol of dominance that, by nature, parallels imperialist projects. He writes, "When sound power is sufficient to create a large acoustic profile, we may speak of it, too, as imperialistic. For instance, a man with a loud-speaker is more imperialistic than one without because he can dominate more acoustic space" (77). After all, "if cannons had been silent, they would never have been used in warfare" (77-8). Similarly, in an article on noise abatement campaigns, Karen Bijsterveld suggests that twentieth century Western culture tends to associate strength with the high volume sound of technology.[52] Further, Richard Cullen Rath writes about early American planters who repeatedly passed laws against drums, which they believed could be used as battle signals. No such laws were passed regarding quieter instruments.[53] Loud noise does not peaceably enter a soundscape, but rather invades and conquers the acoustic space, forcing itself into the expanse, eclipsing any sound already residing there.

In 1844 Nathaniel Hawthorne experienced this effect when he sat down to describe his observations of the wooded "Sleepy Hollow" neighborhood near Concord. The peacefulness of the scene is interrupted by an unwelcome noise. "But hark! there is the whistle of the locomotive - the long shriek, harsh, above all other harshness, for the space of a mile cannot mollify it into harmony.[…I]t brings the noisy world into the

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[51] For information on sound warfare and sonic torture weapons such as long range acoustic devices (LRADs), see http://science.howstuffworks.com/lrad.htm and the Discovery Channel's series *Future Weapons*, Season 1, "Future Shock."

[52] See Karin Bijsterveld, "The Diabolical Symphony of the Mechanical Age: Technology and Symbolism of Sound in European and North American Noise Abatement Campaigns, 1900-40," *Social Studies of Science*, 31 (February 2001): 37-70.

[53] See Richard Cullen Rath, *How Early America Sounded*, (2003).

midst of our slumbrous peace" (Hawthorne 100). Without regard for Hawthorne's "slumbrous peace," the train whistle expands far beyond the tracks, across, at least, "the space of a mile." Hawthorne's critical review of the train's whistle by no means encapsulates a collective understanding of its significance in the 19th century, as demonstrated by the central conflict that Norris presents in *The Octopus*: for some, the train whistle is a symbol of progress, expansion, and capital; for others it is a symbol of regression, contraction, and avarice. What Hawthorne's experience does demonstrate, however, is the potential for disruption that the train and its sounds carried, a notion that Norris explores to a much greater extent with regard to the wheat ranchers. The train whistle participates in "a definition of space by acoustic means," a method "much more ancient than the establishment of property lines and fences" (Schafer 33). While the clamor of the locomotive and the shriek of its whistle are heard over a certain amount of time - several seconds, minutes, maybe - it is significant to Schafer's idea of sound imperialism that they are also heard over a certain amount of space. Although the sounds and volumes of the train and the organ seem to have similar properties for Norris, an important distinction must be made: the train whistle imposed itself upon Hawthorne, disrupting his serenity and peace – he could no more have controlled it than the weather; Norris, however, imposed himself upon the organ – he welcomed, nay, invited the sound's envelopment of him by stepping inside the instrument.

"Dealing with Forces" of Wheat and Rail

In his speech to Presley, Shelgrim connects the wheat operation to the Railroad: "You are dealing with forces, young man, when you speak of Wheat and the Railroads,

not with men. . . . The Wheat is one force, the Railroad, another, and there is the law that governs them - supply and demand" (451). In this way, Shelgrim makes it plain to Presley that these two opposing "forces" can be classified in similar terms. For a moment, this declaration takes Presley by surprise, though he soon concedes Shelgrim's point: "It rang with the clear reverberation of truth" (452). This comparison comes as no shock to readers, however, because Norris repeatedly provides sound cues that allow readers to detect the connection. Early in the novel, we are given Annie Derrick's response to the Railroad: "Annie Derrick feared the railroad. At night, when everything else was still, the distant roar of passing trains echoed across Los Muertos, from Guadalajara, from Bonneville, or from the Long Trestle, straight into her heart. At such moments she saw very plainly the galloping terror of steam and steel. . . " (Norris 142). It is because of this feeling of "terror," which goes "straight into her heart," that Mrs. Derrick can sympathize with the rabbit that, fearful of the loud "horns," "bells," and "tin pans clamorously beaten," jumps into her lap during the rabbit-drive (391). The sounds of the drive, created by "the same people seen at the barn-dance" (383) – the wheat ranchers and their neighbors – are as terrifying to the rabbits as the sound of the train is to Mrs. Derrick.

In effect, the ranchers do to the rabbits what they feel is being done to them by the railroad, as well as what they would like to do to the railroad in return. Through his descriptions of the sounds that the animals make during the drive, the narrator suggests that, with limited access to or power over the railroad, the rabbits become the misdirected target of the ranchers' aggression. Although normally somewhat quiet animals, during their run for survival the rabbits create a large acoustic profile: "the scuffing thud of innumerable feet over the earth rose to a reverberating murmur as of distant thunder, here

and there pierced by the strange, wild cry of the rabbit in distress" (392). The "reverberating murmur as of distant thunder," is very similar to the train engine, which Norris repeatedly describes as thunderous, while the rabbits' "strange, wild cry" could be likened, in the ranchers' ears, to the sound of the locomotive's whistle. Once bound in the corral, the rabbits seem to become the mirror image of Norris's metaphor for the organ's sound: "They [the younger boys] walked unsteadily upon the myriad of crowding bodies underfoot, or, as space was cleared, sank almost waist deep into the mass that leaped and squirmed about them" (*Octopus* 393). In the organ, Norris describes the music as a "multitude of notes crowded together in that narrow space fought each other as they struggled to escape. . . " (*Apprenticeship* 221). The like images of crowded movement and struggle for escape depicted in both moments suggests that, though the rabbits are not described sonically in this passage, they yet represent Norris's conception of imperial sound as it resonates within the body of the source. Through their rabbit drive, the ranchers fulfill the role that Shelgrim would have them play. The ranchers act as a formidable, united force against a vulnerable, surrogate opposition, while Annie Derrick alone considers the inhumanity of their objective. The rabbit drive, perhaps more than any other scene in the novel, complicates the ranchers' position for the reader, as the actions of the ranchers begin to resemble those of the men in control of the railroad.

At the end of the novel, the connection between Wheat and Railroad is even more aurally explicit. Norris's description of the harvester is very much like his descriptions of the train. There are a total of twenty references to the train or the Railroad as "monster" throughout *The Octopus*. The wheat harvester, similarly, is described as "the vast brute," "a hippopotamus," and "a dinosaur." Beyond these visual descriptions, however, the

sounds of the harvester and train are also similar: “The steam hissed and rasped; the ground reverberated a hollow note . . . [and the] wheat stalks . . . rattled like dry rushes in a hurricane. . . . His ears were shocked and assaulted by a myriad-tongued clamor, clashing steel, straining belts, jarring woodwork . . .” (482-3). This description of the harvester working the wheat reminds the reader of any number of sonic descriptions of the train, but particularly the first one mentioned in this essay. There the train roars with a “hollow diapason” (44). Its whistle is “hoarse, bellowing, ringing,” as the “galloping monster, the terror of steel and steam” makes its way across the tracks. The similar sonic images of “steam,” “hollow” tones, “dry” rattling and hoarseness, and “steel,” are unmistakable. Thus, while Shelgrim implies that both the wheat and the railroad are similar in that they are ungovernable (at least by any single person or group of people), Norris’s sound descriptions reveal that the two are, perhaps, more similar than even Shelgrim realizes. By listening to the novel, the reader discovers that the novel’s Wheat protagonist is as imperial as the antagonist Railroad.

Conquering California, An Imperial Triad

Norris further troubles the wheat and rail tension that dominates the novel through his descriptions of the mission and its sounds. While Shelgrim does seem to have a point – the wheat and the railroad are two enormous entities in the text that are, at once, at odds with one another and correlated through the implications of sound and action – though his understanding of the struggle for land in California is nearsighted, or nearlistened if you will, at best. Just prior to his initial audition of the train, Presley hears the bell ringing from the mission, and the narrator refers to the de Profundis, the Penitential Psalm for the

faithful departed, as "a note of the Old World; of the ancient regime, an echo from the hillsides of mediaeval Europe, sounding there in this new land, unfamiliar and strange at this end-of-the-century time" (43). Norris was familiar with the lore of the Spanish missions in California. In the July 3, 1897 issue of *The Wave*, he published a piece titled "Birthday of an Old Mission: Mission San Juan Celebrates Its Hundredth Anniversary." It seems that this mission - dating from 1797 - inspired the mission in the novel. The fictional mission poses a portrait of "St. John the Baptist, the patron saint of the Mission, the *San Juan Bautista*, of the early days . . ." (Norris *Octopus* 110). Aside from the fictional and historical missions having the same name, the ways that Norris describes each further establishes a connection between the two. Although Norris's journalism chronicles facts and events, there is a tone in his writing that recalls the romanticized Mission that the reader also detects in *The Octopus*. He writes in *The Wave* of the mission's founding in the distant past: "The ancient little town is in a state of excitement. . . . It was built there nearly one hundred years ago, which is ancient history as things go in California. Prior to that time the old Mission had been erected . . ." (Norris *Apprenticeship v.2* 14). Norris goes on to lament the fact that the original roof was replaced: "It is a thousand pities that the picturesque tiled roof has been removed and supplanted by the ugly modern affair" (14). However he finds the supper served in the mission to be "charming." Borrowing from this experience, the author conveys in *The Octopus* his understanding of what a California mission should be: ancient, picturesque, and charming, with the whisper of a de Profundis in the air around it.

The mission in *The Octopus* recalls the bygone Spanish empire: ancient, a remnant of the Old World. In *Negotiating Conquest* (2006), Miroslava Chavez-Garcia

discusses the motives of Spain and the Catholic Church as missions were established throughout California: "The Catholic Church became an arm or instrument of the Spanish Crown in conquering and colonizing New Spain's northern frontier" (6). The conquest was both a military one and a spiritual one. Yet that does not mean that the two bodies were working together. Clerics, like Father Serra, president of the California missions from 1767-1784, made frequent complaints about the military leadership, straining relationships between clergy and soldiers:

> At the root of the dispute were conflicting views about the Church's role in the conquest and colonization of California. Father Serra strongly believed that the Church's responsibility for evangelizing and converting 'infidels' to Christianity took precedence over all other temporal matters. In contrast, the secular arm of government, including the military saw the friars and the Church as instruments for furthering the conquest. (13)

Although the mission's history is temporally removed from the novel's present, Norris has chosen to base his fictional version on a historical mission. In doing so, he connects the novel's mission to a very real history of conquest, one that Norris sees as the first note, or tonic, of an imperial triad - the subsequent notes being independent Mexican rule and post-1848 U.S. expansion west, aided by the railroad.

The peaceful, quiet, idyllic chanting from the mission seems, at first listen, to be placed in opposition to the train, which enters the soundscape with "terrific clatter" before "the noise of the engine lapsed" (Norris *Octopus* 43-4). From Presley's temporally and geographically removed vantage point, the narrator is better able to romanticize the sounds of the Mission: "There was not a sound other than the de Profundis, still sounding

very far away. At long intervals the great earth sighed dreamily in its sleep. All about, the feeling of absolute peace and quiet and security and untroubled happiness and content seemed descending from the stars like a benediction" (Norris *Octopus* 43). The train's disturbance of this idyllic scene is interrupted by "the cries of agony, sobbing wails of infinite pain . . . from a little distance." The reader might initially take this to be cries of mourning related to the singing of the de Profundis. As Presley moves away, finally, "the silence was profound, unbroken," until "faint and prolonged across the levels of the ranch, he heard the engine whistling for Bonneville" (44-5). The reader comes to realize that the cries are not those of the bereaved, but of sheep slaughtered by the passing train. Once again, the train and the mission appear at odds when the locomotive kills the sheep, symbols of the followers of Christianity.[54] Moreover, these are the same sheep for which Vanamee, who spends much of his time in the mission garden and in discourse with Father Sarria, cares. The mere presence of the mission in the novel asks readers to consider how the native populations became devout. In this way, the sheep come to represent not just the Christian faithful, but the missionizing process and Spanish (and later Mexican, between 1821 and 1833 when the missions were officially secularized) participation in an imperial project that took place across the same geographic space that the Railroad seeks to control. [55] As the sounds of the train and the sheep mingle together – first one is heard, then the other, then the first again – Norris chips away at the barrier between past and present, revealing not an aural conflict, but a sonic interplay between

[54] For a different interpretation of this scene, see Heinz Ickstadt, "The Rhetoric of Expansionism in Painting and Fiction (1880-1910)," *American Empire: Expansionist Cultures and Policies, 1881-1917* (1990), 9-29.

[55] The mission on which Norris's fictional mission is based (San Juan Bautista) is the only one of 21 missions that continued to employ a priest after Spanish rule. See Marjorie Pierce, *East of the Gabilans* (1976).

the two temporal moments and imperial endeavors.

Presley's audition of the mission bell is similarly significant to the mission's imperial history. As Schafer notes, for the Christian community, the church bell is one of the most significant sound signals, defining the parish "an acoustic space, circumscribed by the range of the church bell. . . . Wherever the missionaries took Christianity, the church bell was soon to follow, acoustically demarking the civilization of the parish from the wilderness beyond its earshot. . . . " (Schafer 54-5).[56] Almost as soon as the bell rings and the de Profundis becomes audible, both sounds are overpowered by another: "But suddenly there was an interruption. . . . He had only time to jump back upon the embankment when, with a quivering of all the earth, a locomotive . . . shot by him with a roar" (Norris 43). Reading the scene as it is written, and in conjunction with Norris's idealized perception of the San Juan mission in *The Wave*, it seems as though the train's interruption of Presley's peaceful meditation would comply with Leo Marx's interpretation of Hawthorne's experience in Sleepy Hollow: the intrusion Presley experiences is "the disturbance of the pastoral ideal" (Bijsterveld 38).[57] A contrapuntal reading, however, reveals that the train whistle and mission bell are, in fact, similar – not in pitch or tone, but in meaning. [58]

Like the train, the mission bell sonically stakes its claim over an acoustically defined area of geographic space. Thus, in the context of Spanish colonization, not only does the building and name of the mission carry historical implications of subjugation,

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[56] See Alain Corbin's *Village Bells: Sound and Meaning in the 19th-Century French Countryside* (1998) for more on church bells, which "served to define a territory" (96).
[57] See Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*, (1964).
[58] For Edward Said's definition of a "contrapuntal reading," see *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), 66.

the *sound* of its bell carries the same significance.[59] At one time, bells were more than merely pleasing, nostalgic, "Old World" sounds that they are to Presley; rather, they "were *listened to*, and evaluated," a functional part of daily life (Corbin xix), more in the way that Presley listens to, evaluates, and responds to the sound and feel of the locomotive. Yet his distance from its source distorts Presley's impression of the bell's sound. Today, people ring bells by striking the clapper against the inside of the bell; the sound is directed downward during tintinnabulation. In the nineteenth century and earlier, however, bells were typically hung on axils attached to pulleys. This allowed them to swing in large arcs, projecting their sound outward, rather than down, and creating an extremely high volume sound, which was amplified when the bell was hung high in a belfry.[60] The narrator describes the mission accordingly: "The main body of the church itself was at right angles to the colonnade, and at the point of intersection rose the belfry tower . . . where swung the three cracked bells, the gift of the King of Spain" (Norris *Octopus* 38). For Presley, the bell creates a "far off," peaceful sort of sound; but heard from the mission grounds, it would have been extremely loud, as it likely "swung" in a large arc. He is, after all, more than an hour away from the mission on bicycle. Absorbed as he is in thoughts of epic poetry, Presley fails to hear the full historical timbre of the bell, or consider that what sounds pleasing to his ear might be severely uncomfortable to the ears of hearers in closer proximity. That he can still clearly hear the bell at such a distance suggests an acoustic profile large enough to comply with Schafer's definition of sound imperialism. Thus the sonic interruption of bell by train, again, signifies two

[59] In *Death Comes for the Archbishop* (1927), which is primarily derived from history, Willa Cather notes in a speech by the Bishop that the first bells in Europe were brought from the east during the crusades, that they are "really an adaptation of a Moslem custom" (36). Thus the bell can be connected to an even earlier European imperial past.
[60] See Richard Cullen Rath's *How Early America Sounded* (2003), 43-5.

empires: one fading, and one emerging.

Through the mission's fountain, however, Norris presents a different kind of sound imperialism that Schafer either did not consider in his postulation, or chose to ignore. An analysis of temporal acoustics, however, is significant to an understanding the function of the mission in *The Octopus*. As though aware of its diminishing significance, the mission fountain keeps time meticulously, numbering the years, days, minutes since the mission's zenith. Indeed, the constant trickle becomes the keynote of the garden, though only Vanamee, the sheepherder who spends much of his time in the mission garden, and the narrator notice it. It is ever present and helps to define the perceived serenity of the mission garden. When Vanamee approaches the garden, he sees that "there was a little fountain in a stone basin green with moss, while just beyond, between the fountain and the pear trees, stood what was left of a sun dial, the bronze gnomon, green with the beatings of the weather, the figures on the half-circle of the dial worn away, illegible" (112). A few moments after this fountain image, the narrator states, "There was no wind, no sound. The insistent flowing of the fountain seemed only as the symbol of the passing of time, a thing that was understood rather than heard, inevitable, prolonged" (113). Much later in the novel, "Only within the garden, the intermittent trickling of the fountain made itself heard, flowing steadily, marking off the lapse of seconds, the progress of hours, the cycle of years, the inevitable march of centuries" (299). And again, "The minutes passed. The fountain dripped steadily. . . . Nothing stirred. The silence was profound" (304). In each instance, the faint sound of the fountain is connected to an idea of time, associating the flow of water with the passing of seconds, hours, and centuries.

Norris's juxtaposition of time and fountain is likely a reference to the ancient

clepsydra, or "water clock," which marks time by a steady flow of water. One advantage of the clepsydra over the sundial is that the former could keep track of time at night and indoors. Schafer notes that aural timekeepers had a great advantage over the sundial because one had to face the dial in order to know the time. The clock bell [like the fountain] "sends the sound of time rolling out uniformly in all directions" (Schafer 55). It is possible that Father Sarria realizes the greater versatility of the clepsydra and, therefore, allows the sundial to erode while the ancient fountain remains undamaged. It is significant, however, that within the mission walls, an audible clock entirely replaces the silent one. In this way, Norris creates a different kind of sound imperialism. Rather than dominating acoustic space, as in Schafer's model, the flow of the mission clepsydra is a sound that dominates acoustic time, in that it has been heard continuously over the course of centuries, faint though its intonations may be. The water clock's sound is imbedded in the history of an empire much older than the Spanish one under which the mission was founded.[61] Once again, Norris blurs the distinction between past and present.

At least on the mission grounds, then, a façade of the pastoral ideal conceals the mission's imperial past. The quietude of the garden works to silence the historical, spiritual, and military conquest associated with the mission system, which, at one time, converted as many as1,000 Indians every four years (as the Mission San Juan of Norris's *The Wave* article did in the first years of its establishment). Vanamee is able, therefore, to escape the "obnoxious" industrial noises of the modern world while in the garden. However, by alluding to the sounds of the "great grim world," represented by the sounds of a locomotive, the narrator ensures that the reader "hears" them in the mind's ear, even

[61] See James Ker, "Drinking from the Water-Clock: Time and Speech in Imperial Rome," *Arethusa*, 42 (October 2009), 279-302.

though the narrative action is in a place where those sounds should not be audible (*Octopus* 113). In this way, the narrator creates an implicit aural connection between the "Outside" world and that of the mission, though each is "far off" from the other.

Moreover, if the abrasive sounds of the "Outside," which expand over geographic space, echo the movement of present empire, which also expands over geographic space, then the muted sounds of the mission can be heard as the echoes of that prior era. In *The Ninth Bridgewater Treatise: A Fragment* (1838), Charles Babbage postulates that a sound once uttered is forever imprinted on the atoms that its sound waves moved. In this way,

> The air itself is one vast library, on whose pages are for ever written all that man has ever said or woman whispered. There, in their mutable but unerring characters, mixed with the earliest, as well as with the latest sighs of mortality, stand for ever recorded, vows unredeemed, promises unfulfilled, perpetuating in the united movements of each particle, the testimony of man's changeful will. (Babbage 112)

With time and mathematical knowledge, Babbage thought, humans could potentially develop the ability to "read" the sounds in the air, to determine when and where they began. In other words, for Babbage, the sounds of the past fully exist in the present; they have been merely temporarily inaudible. Norris's mission implies something similar through its quietness. The tranquil sounds of bell, song, voice, and fountain, which are audible in Father Sarria's time, represent Norris's metaphorical "reading" of the ancient atmosphere. That some sound is still heard, that the mission yet exists though the empire which created it has fallen, denotes the former strength of both, as Presley's audition of the mission bell from so great a distance denotes its sonic strength. The presence of the

mission in *The Octopus*, as well as its accompanying de Profundis, bell, and clepsydra, complicates the oppositional binary of Wheat and Railroad – which strive to create an American empire of the western frontier – by recalling and resounding a past in which the same "open" land was previously colonized.

"Perhaps he doand hear me": The Sound of Silence in San Francisco

San Francisco, unlike the mission and the ranches, is strikingly silent in the novel. This comes unexpectedly to Norris's readers because in much of his fiction aside from *The Octopus*, the author portrays cities as sonically vibrant. Yablon writes, "Norris's readers would describe *The Pit* as a noisy novel. . . . The 'fingerprints of the great gods Size and Noise are on every page,' wrote the *Nation*, imprinted on the domestic as well as the urban scenes" (650). Likewise, Schweighauser suggests that Norris conveys McTeague's unrest by highlighting his attention to the city's noises.[62] In the May 22, 1897 issue of *The Wave*, Norris published an essay titled "Metropolitan Noises: The Gamut of Sounds Which Harass the Ears of San Francisco" (Norris *Apprenticeship v.1* 274). The piece describes, with a sensitive ear, the many noises of the city:

> Put your head from the office window some day . . , pause for an instant as you read these words and listen to the sound the city makes in its living. You will notice that there are two parts to this sound, two registers as one might say. First there is the multifarious staccato notes, brief, incisive, a world of little sharp, high-keyed ear-jars, but under these, below these

[62] See Philipp Schweighauser, "The Soundscapes of Naturalism," *The Noises of American Literature, 1890-1985: Toward a History of Literary Acoustics* (2006), 32.

> (you wouldn't hear it at first, and it takes some little application to catch it), comes a low pitch bourdon, a protracted baser hum, arising, God knows where. (274-5)

While this passage seems to be an objective description of Norris' awareness of city noise, the author notes in two separate occasions his physician's warnings against noise: "nothing could be more harrowing and more hurtful" (Norris *Apprenticeship v.1* 276). Norris's inclusion of these notes suggests that he could not have listened to the noise around him with disinterest. The problem of street noise was one that continuously plagued middle-class city-dwellers. Nick Yablon and others have discussed this phenomenon in terms of noise abatement efforts in urban areas, or "anti-nuisance regulations" as Norris terms them (*Apprenticeship v. 1* 274). These included the designation of quiet zones, particularly in middle and upper class neighborhoods, which were ultimately "rendered futile by the indiscriminate diffusion of sound" (Yablon 633). This sense of futility, nevertheless, subdued neither bourgeois efforts toward silence, nor complaints against noise. Any remotely faithful description of San Francisco in the novel would require that the narrator include sound descriptions that reflect these noise issues, especially considering his scrupulous inclusion of high volume sound throughout the rest of the novel. Thus, Norris's unwillingness to describe sound in the San Francisco scenes at the end of *The Octopus*, where elsewhere in the novel sound is prevalent, aside from reminding readers of the author's indifference toward Realist teacup novels, chiefly serves to emphasize those rare urban moments that are sounded. [63]

Just as prolonged silence makes infrequent occurrences of sound more

[63] For a comment on Levi-Strauss' idea of how silence can emphasize the significance of sound, see Richard Jackson, "Sound and Ritual," *Man, New Series* 3 (June 1968): 293-299.

pronounced in the world at large, it seems as though Norris's anomalous city silence in *The Octopus* carries significance as well. For this reason, perhaps, Norris has chosen to place such weight, through silent contrast, on moments of aurality. While loud sound in the novel indicates expanding empire, and quiet, continuous sound implies past empire, the relative silence of the city seems to point toward a middle and upper class urban utopia – a space of established and thriving micro-empire, so to speak. This is the kind of space Norris might have longed for while composing "Metropolitan Noises." Along with the metropolitan noises of development, traffic, and trade, nineteenth and early twentieth-century bourgeois classes in England and the United States complained about immigrant noises, voices, and street musicians intruding on their sonic environments. "Ethnic, industrial, or working-class sounds thus resonated with a larger threat of socio-spatial flux" (Yablon 632). Whereas silence was sought after, sometimes desperately, by the wealthy, it proves fatal to one immigrant family in *The Octopus*. Through the scenes of victuals and luxury in the Gerard home, Norris interlaces scenes of the poverty, begging, and starvation that Mrs. Hooven and little Hilda endure after Mr. Hooven is killed by a gunshot wound during the fight between ranchers and railroad representatives. Even when Mrs. Hooven asks for charity, before she dies later that night of starvation, the interaction on the part of the giver is completely silent:

> At last, a solitary pedestrian came into view, a young man in a top hat and overcoat, walking rapidly. Mrs. Hooven held out a quivering hand as he passed her.
>
> 'Say, say, den, Meest'r, blease hellup a boor womun.'
>
> The other hurried on. (474)

Mrs. Hooven and Hilda, whose thickly accented voices comprise the majority of the described sound of the city streets, are perceived as poor, noise producing immigrants, and thereby threats to the silent urban utopia.[64] Thus, they are continually herded by police officers from one hushed space to another.

Amidst these street scenes, the narrator juxtaposes descriptions of Presley at the Gerrard dinner – cutting cinematically from the Hoovens to the Gerrards and back again. The close narrative proximity of the Gerrards to the street scenes suggests that Norris means to connect the wealthy family to the implied urban utopia of quietude described above. It was for people like the Gerrards that quiet zones would have been implemented. Had she found herself near the Gerrard home, Mrs. Hooven's heavily accented begging likely would have been an unwelcome interruption to the Gerrard dinner, and a police officer might have directed Mrs. Hooven, yet again, to another location. The contrived wealthy quietude, marred only by faintly trickling fountains and clinking crystal, that permeates the Gerrard dining room, serves as a softer complement to Schafer's sound imperialism. Rather than sound raucously dominating and controlling a soundscape, Norris offers, through the city scenes, a kind of quiet control: silence spreads across and invades the acoustic space of the city as intensely and dangerously as does the sound of the locomotive across the ranchlands. As with the train sounds, the literal and metaphorical silence imposed on Mrs. Hooven, who tries in her own way, and without effectual success, to break it, ultimately destroys the Hooven family, killing Mrs. Hooven and driving Minna to prostitution.

The fountain at the Gerard home is distinguished by its unexpected sounding in

[64] For more on accents in ethnically diverse populations and noise, see Mark M. Smith, *Listening to Nineteenth-Century America* (2001), 121.

the quiet city scenes: "From the conservatory near-by came the splashing of a fountain" (464). The quick reference is enough to remind readers of the other, more frequently cited fountain in the mission garden. With the two fountains – one the remnant of a fading empire, and the other an ornament, symbolic of the wealth associated with the current empire – Norris implies a continuity of desire for territorial control between past and present. Another instance returns the reader, as in the opening chapter of the novel, to Presley's listening perspective. At the Gerard dinner, "Presley could find no enjoyment... From that picture of feasting, that scene of luxury, that atmosphere of decorous, well-bred refinement, his thoughts went back to Los Muertos and Quien Sabe," to the gunfight during which many of his friends were killed (476). The narrator notes that for Presley, "The clink of the wine glasses was drowned in the explosion of the revolvers." In a relatively quiet scene, the "clink" is indeed "explosive" to the mind's ear while reading. But instead of a "clink," Presley hears in his memory the "explosive" gunfight between the ranchers and S. Behrman's entourage. He understands the Gerard's money (represented by the delicate "clink") to have been gained from the slaughter of his friends (represented by the explosion of the revolvers).

Although the mission is too far removed from the city to have been involved in any officially allocated "anti-nuisance regulations," the commonality of quietude in the Gerard home and the mission offers a striking parallel. While the quiet of Norris's imagined San Francisco is upheld with an almost religious vigor, the fading mission finds an explicit historical connection with the wealth of Spanish royalty, the mission's three bells, for example, had been a "gift of the King of Spain" (Norris *Octopus* 38).[65] The relative silence of these two spaces (the only two in the novel that are not defined by

[65] The mission's three bells were a "gift of the King of Spain" (38).

excessively loud sounds), combined with their twin trickling fountains, suggests that Norris meant for them to be associated with one another – just as the similar sound descriptions of the wheat harvester and locomotive suggest a correlation between the two machines. Each space is not only defined by its comparative silence; each is also defined by a sense that its silence, both literal and metaphorical, has been imposed on others.

Straining the Ear

Thus far, it seems as though *The Octopus* is the quintessential Naturalist novel, through which Norris has created a "world of big things; the enormous, the formidable," a world in which "terrible things must happen to the characters. . . . They must be twisted from the ordinary, wrenched out from the quiet, uneventful round of every-day life" (Norris *Apprenticeship v. 1* 86). Shelgrim, after all, would have Presley believe that "the enormous, the formidable" forces of Wheat and Railroad move themselves and produce their sounds without regard for their effects on individuals, without regard for anything at all. Mrs. Hooven is caught in it, as is S. Behrman, whose voice is muffled by noise: "The steady, metallic roar of the pouring wheat drowned out [S. Behrman's] voice" (503). This seems not to be what Norris terms "the real Realism," or what is "likely to happen between lunch and supper," but rather Naturalism's "world of big things." Yet Norris has made clear that his naturalistic novel is, at times, contrary to the basic principles of the movement. He subverts literary Naturalism's tendency toward a dualistic world of "FORCES" with his inclusion of the mission, even as he establishes it through the wheat

and the railroad.[66] Even so, it is difficult to find any individuals in *The Octopus* who demonstrate their agency by challenging the enormous forces that blow through the novel; even more obscure, perhaps nonexistent, are those who enjoy a positive outcome to their challenges.

Presley seems to be the possible exception. From the novel's start, he makes efforts toward controlling his sonic environment by listening to it, interpreting it, and responding to it, by altering it, by removing himself from it, and by talking to others about it. However Presley does suffer frequently from an inability to hear properly; his ear remains frustratingly inadequate as he tries and fails to perceive his epic poem. He seems to regard it as something existing in the atmosphere, but that he can't quite reach. Emerson describes this phenomenon in "The Poet" (1844):

> For poetry was all written before time was, and whenever we are so finely organized that we can penetrate into that region where the air is music, we hear those primal warblings and attempt to write them down. . . . The men of more delicate ear write down these cadences more faithfully, and these transcripts, though imperfect, become the songs of nations. (319)

For Emerson, listening seems to be the key to writing, and it seems to be an Emersonian national song that Presley wants to write. After listening to Vanamee's "monotonous undertones, like little notes of harmony in a musical progression," Presley senses his poem near at hand: "Abruptly his great poem, his Song of the West, leaped up again in his imagination. For the moment, he all but held it. It was there, close at hand. In another instant he would grasp it" (37). Of course his reach fails, and he is left feeling that "We

[66] For more on Naturalism and duality see Charles Child Walcutt, *American Literary Naturalism, A Divided Stream* (1956), 4-6.

are out of touch. We are out of tune." Again, after hearing the mission bell and the de Profundis, he approaches clarity: "The beauty of his poem, its idyl, came to him like a caress; that alone had been lacking. It was that, perhaps, which had left it hitherto incomplete. At last he was able to grasp his song in all its entity. But suddenly there was an interruption" (43). Part of his difficulty in writing may be in his own synesthesia. A sound cue ("monotonous undertones . . . ") triggers a perceived tactile sensation – at times just out of reach and at others "like a caress." While he "'*felt* his poem,' as he called this sensation, so poignantly" (40, emphasis mine), he imagines the verse, as it will someday be, in *sonic* terms: "The great poem of the West. It's that which I want to write. Oh, to put it all into hexameters; strike the great iron note; sing the vast, terrible song; the song of the People; the forerunners of empire!" (37). Presley refers to the poem as a song that will strike a "great iron note" among the people, though he rarely if ever listens for it – as Emerson would advise – when he attempts to compose it. Although adept in other contexts, with regard to his poem, it is as though Presley's sensory perceptions have been muddled, and he is left unable to hear or feel his poem, despite his most ardent efforts.

It is clear in these moments of aural and tactile imperceptions that Presley suffers from an inability to adequately transpose what he feels to the page, to a readable, and thereby audible, document. Despite his sensory miscommunication, however, more than any other character, he also makes efforts to try to take control of what he perceives. More specifically, Presley acts against the novel's "FORCES" to change his own sonic environment. Immediately upon interpreting the sources of the combined sounds of "hollow diapason" and "sobbing wails" in the moment described early in this essay, Presley performs in a way that could seem cowardly: he escapes the scene, "almost

running, even putting his hands over his ears till he was out of hearing distance of that all but human distress. Not until he was beyond ear-shot did he pause, looking back, listening" (Norris 45). What Presley demonstrates here, however, is not a craven nature, but an ability to change the soundscape that surrounds him based on his interpretation of it. Although he cannot save the sheep from the locomotive's slaughter, he can protect himself from the continued agony of hearing the sheep's suffering. Once safely "beyond ear-shot" of the sheep, Presley allows himself to listen to the soundscape again. Other characters in the novel accept sounds as unavoidable, or make similar attempts to defy them as Presley does, but without success. When the wheat growers form a league to counter the railroad, for example, Mrs. Derrick gets caught in the men's "vast thunder of savage jubilation" (219). She reacts by "leaning against the wall, her hands shut over her ears; her eyes, dilated with fear, brimming with tears" (219). She, too, covers her ears, and the action, like Presley's is compulsory, born out of extreme fear. Unlike Presley, however, she does not attempt a physical escape from the sounds. She remains immobile. Likewise, the wheat growers listen, as Presley does, but are not successful interpreters of what they hear. Indeed the gunfight begins with a series of aural and visual cues:

> 'There – listen,' suddenly exclaimed Harran. 'The Governor [Magnus Derrick] is calling us. Come on; I'm going.'
>
> Osterman got out of the ditch and came forward, catching Harran by the arm and pulling him back.
>
> 'He didn't call. Don't get excited. You'll ruin everything. Get back into the ditch again.'
>
> But Cutter, Phelps, and the old man Dabney, misunderstanding

> what was happening, and seeing Osterman leave the ditch, had followed his example. (407)

Soon after, the other wheat-growers follow suit and the "road in front of the ditch" was "nothing but a confused roar of explosions" (408). Not only did the ranchers misread what they saw in Osterman's actions, but they also failed to listen to his words.

For Presley, however, listening is such a significant act that he gives a speech in the opera house, a space built for a listening audience, on the perils that await those who refuse to listen to their perceived subordinates: "Caesar refused to listen and was stabbed in the Senate House. The Bourbon Louis refused to listen and died on the guillotine; Charles Stuart refused to listen and died on the block; the white Czar refused to listen and was blown up in his own capital" (431). While Presley's speech elicits "a prolonged explosion of applause," (432), the "ranchers, country people, [and] store-keepers" comprehended not a word. Instead, they "applauded vociferously but perfunctorily, in order to appear to understand" (433). While Presley tries to move the people to action against the railroad, their inability to listen and interpret leaves them stagnant. This is not Presley's only attempt to get others to listen. He hears his friends talk about making the Railroad Trust listen: "That talk is just what the Trust wants to hear. It ain't frightened of that. There's one thing only it does listen to, one thing it is frightened of – the people with dynamite in their hands, – six inches of plugged gaspipe. THAT talks" (280-1). Unlike his friends, Presley takes this to heart, and throws a bomb in S. Behrman's window. Like the opera house audience, however, S. Behrman ultimately "listens" to Presley's dynamite with indifference. In some ways, Presley's attempts to make others listen are like the sounds of the locomotive, forcing their way into reluctant ears. The difference is

that Presley's aim is not domination of a symbolic acoustic space, or any other kind of space for that matter. Rather, his goal is the audience's sympathetic interpretation of his words and a joint effort toward listening – an effort that he believes to be the only way to a peaceful resolution.

Shortly after giving his opera house speech, Presley meets with Shelgrim, president of the railroad company. Presley was "all attention, [and] listened breathlessly" (449). Shelgrim's listening, however, exists only in the realm of the hypothetical: "If I am to listen . . . I prefer to listen to it first hand. I would rather listen to what the great French painter has to say, than to what YOU have to say about what he has already said" (450). Shelgrim's unreceptiveness aligns him with those men of power that Presley spoke about to the ranchers and townspeople, thereby foreshadowing his representative's death by wheat at the end of the novel. Moreover, these moments reveal Presley's agency in a world dominated by imperial sounds, and his unwillingness to accept them as immutable. In this way, Presley becomes more like Norris when he stepped into the organ: rather than lamenting their entrance, Presley both invites and challenges the sounds of his acoustic space.

Frank Norris intends the sound descriptions in *The Octopus* to be heard in the mind's ear as readily as they are to be seen with the mind's eye. The reader can expect nothing less from an author who was engaged in such writing activities as "Inside an Organ." Norris uses sound as an interpretive guide for the reader. Just as Presley must learn to listen in order to write his epic poem, Norris asks his reader to learn to listen in order to understand his Epic of Wheat. Further, he asks the reader to avoid the mistakes of Presley's counterparts who pretend to listen, who mishear, or who merely talk about

listening as a future possibility, and who ultimately fall victim to the whims of the forces they seek to challenge. Thus, through *The Octopus*, Norris develops an acoustic theory of space and time, which is neither smooth nor linear, but cyclical, fragmented, connected, as he layers New World upon Old, and sonically closes the rift between Wheat and Rail, and between character and reader. The clink of the Gerrards' crystal takes Presley back to the gunfight at the ranch; the splash of the fountain takes the reader back to the mission garden; the roar of the train takes Norris back to the inside of an organ; the ring of a bell takes the mission from a New World to an Old. Ultimately, *The Octopus* disrupts Norris's own idea that United States empire is on a "westward-moving course" by representing expansion as an aural, radial diffusion rather than a unidirectional, single-file march. Through sonic descriptions of locomotive, wheat harvester, fountain, bell, sheep, crystal, and silence, alike, Norris strikes in the ear of the reader, "a vague note of terror quivering throughout like the vibration of an ominous and low-pitched diapason" (Norris *Apprenticeship v. 1* 86). Thus *The Octopus* seems to clarify what Norris means when he writes that Naturalism "is not realism. It is a school by itself, unique, somber, powerful beyond words" (*Apprenticeship v. 1* 87). Through the course of the novel, Norris paradoxically uses words to go "beyond words," to engage not merely the reader's emotions, but his or her sensory perceptions and, ultimately, actions as well. In doing so, Norris seems to cultivate his own unique kind of aural Naturalism that embodies "the vast, the monstrous, and the tragic" of the Mussel Slough and Los Muertos soundscapes.

CODA: "They Made a Loud Clamor": The Sonic Second Conquest

"Well before 1920 [...] many Americans had begun to argue […] that noise was the enemy of progress, the sign of a distinct lack of civilization" (Thompson 120). This notion may sound strange to our American ears, which are so often accustomed to interpreting the images and noises of construction, fast-moving vehicles, or our cell phones as the definitive estimates of what we call "progress" and "civilization." The United States has a long history of grappling with issues of controlling noise in urban settings, however. A 1977 report to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency titled "Noise abatement: Policy Alternatives for Transportation" indicated that, of all the outdoor locations examined, the "3rd Floor Apartment Next to Freeway" in Los Angeles had the highest day-night sound level decibel, followed by a site near a major airport. The report goes on to outline the benefits of limiting high-volume sounds in densely populated areas:

> In general, there are several kinds of effects that noise produces: direct effects on the auditory system: indirect effects on other health, social, and economic variables such as productivity; and effects on annoyance and the quality of life. (105)

Indeed, since the 1960s, noise pollution has been conceived of as an environmental issue under the protection of the law (Schweighauser 3). Long before that, however, Florence Nightingale became one of many medical professionals who deemed it a health hazard by explicitly connecting health and hearing in her *Notes on Nursing* from 1860. She wrote, "unnecessary noise is the most cruel absence of care which can be inflicted either on sick or well" (47). The problem of street noise was one that continuously plagued middle-

class city-dwellers. John Picker, Nick Yablon, and others have discussed this phenomenon in terms of noise abatement efforts in urban areas, which included the designation of "Quiet Zones," particularly in middle- and upper-class white neighborhoods that were ultimately "rendered futile by the indiscriminate diffusion of sound" (Yablon 633). Despite the futility of the effort, it was, significantly, the elite who were able to enjoy the hope of a future salubrious urban quietude. While the upper-classes may have dreamed of quiet streets outside their homes, the people of Helena Maria Viramnotes's *Their Dogs Came with Them* (2007), would have had little such hope.

Set in an East LA barrio, the novel makes temporal shifts between the 1950s, during which the freeway is under construction, and the 1960s, during which a quarantine is in effect. Viramontes's narrator follows the lives of Turtle, an androgynous female gang member and her ruffian brother, Luis; Ermila, a teenager living with her grandparents, who enjoys talking with her friends and avoiding her Mexican cousin, Nacho; Tranquilina and her religiously devout family; and Ana who looks after her mentally unstable brother, Ben. Chavela is an elderly woman who sometimes cares for her young neighbors in the 1950s, but who is forced to leave her home because the freeway's eminent domain through her neighborhood. In the 1960s, though she no longer lives in the barrio, she is very much a part of the community's collective memory.

The mechanical noises of the earthmovers, the freeway, the sirens, helicopters, and sewing machines, which force their way into the ears of the characters in Viramotes's novel, are part of the complex history of noise control briefly described above. I use "control" both in the sense of acoustic volume and geographic location, considering

where and on whom noise is relegated. R. Murray Schafer defines this kind of invasion of acoustic space as "sound imperialism" (Schafer 77-8), a phrase as appropriate in application to Viramontes's freeway as it was to Norris' locomotive, especially considering Viramontes' interpretation of her own work as an allegory of the conquest of the Americas. As the people of the barrio are helpless against the construction of the freeway, which uproots and divides them, they are helpless against the noises associated with its construction. Closely tied to the ideas of invasion and conquest, are the accompanying mechanisms of domination and control, which are found in the work of the novel's Quarantine Authority (the QA). While the freeway forcibly removes members of the community, the QA forcibly contains them.

Through *Their Dogs Came with Them*, Viramontes explores the question, "Why are we killing ourselves, and killing ourselves with such brutality?" Her conclusion is, "If we are treated like dogs, we become dogs." Thus, she "had to go back five hundred years to the Conquest and see the way the conquistadores treated the indigenous people" (Mermann-Jozwiak and Sullivan, 84). Ultimately, the community seems irreparably splintered by the effects, sonic and otherwise, of the freeway and by what Viramontes describes as "brown-on-brown violence." However, with the aid of Karen Bijsterveld's theories on mechanical sound categorization, I argue that the novel's disparate individuals connect, if only during fleeting moments, in sonic attempts to undermine two immutable forces.

At the beginning of the novel, Viramontes highlights her work's connection to early narratives of conquest through an epigraph from *The Broken Spears: The Aztec Account of the Conquest of Mexico*: "Their spears glinted in the sun, and their pennons

fluttered like bats. They made a loud clamor as they marched, for their coats of mail and their weapons clashed and rattled. […]Their dogs came with them, running ahead of the column." Viramontes' novel creates a parallel narrative of invasion and conquest through images of, first, bulldozers (or "earthmovers") and their work toward constructing the freeway, then through descriptions of the freeway and characters' responses to it and to its effects on their neighborhood. Just as the conquistadors moved with "a loud clamor" of armor that "clashed and rattled," the noise of the earthmovers are "unrelenting," and the "morning drone of the freeway" is loud enough to wake Ermila in the morning (Viramontes 77, 171).

One of the implications of the 1977 study by the U.S. EPA quoted above is that, even when the narrator of *Their Dogs* does not specifically mention the freeway sound, readers are to imagine that it is a constant, high-volume presence throughout the novel – the very definition of Schafer's sound imperialism. Hardt and Negri's idea that imperialism spreads "linearly in closed spaces" to "invade, destroy and subsume," (182) holds as much meaning for Viramontes' novel as it does for Norris'. Again, when combined with Schafer's definition of sound imperialism, the reader begins to understand the power of imperialistic sound, which "dominates," "invades," and "subsumes" the soundscape (Schafer 77).[67] Just as the freeway expands across and dominates the *geographic* space of the barrio, the sounds that issue from it expand across and dominate the *acoustic* space. Indeed, "The definition of space by acoustic means is far more ancient

[67] Connected to this is the idea of the violence of sound. Schafer, Bijsterveld, and others have discussed the importance of sound in technologies of war. Schafer puts it most succinctly when he writes: "if cannons had been silent, they would never have been used in warfare" (78). This idea is significant considering Viramontes's choice to set this novel during the Vietnam War.

than the establishment of property lines and fences" (Schafer 33).[68] In this way, the "second conquest," brought about by the expansion of the freeway, becomes a two-fold invasion of spaces in the neighborhood.

Karen Bijsterveld identifies four ideal types of sound, which she terms: intrusive, sensational, sinister, and comforting. Intrusive and sinister sounds are negative, while sensational and comforting sounds are positive. "*Intrusive* […] sounds invade or threaten the existence of something or someone that is vulnerable or fragile […]. The noise frightens the protagonist and seems to move closer and closer toward or even *into* it" (44). The sound of the QA siren exemplifies this type of sound when it reaches Turtle:

> The siren was unending and operatic. Turtle felt her bare feet begin to lift […]. She held on for dear life, not wanting to be drawn in by the shrill, but the ribbon of its wailing was wrapping around her ankles and lifting. The siren's mouth opened wider and Turtle felt her sweaty fingers slipping from their clasp, cautioned at once and forever into the prolonged length of the street's mournful plea. (Viramontes 172)[69]

This passage reveals the all-encompassing power of unbridled sound over the human body and mind, as it represents the potentially negative physical effects of noise pollution

[68] Here, Schafer specifically refers to the various calls of animals and birds, staking claim to their territory through particular sounds. In *Village Bells: Sound and Meaning in the 19th-Century French Countryside*, Alain Corbin interprets the connection between sound and space in a similar way, through the ringing of bells: "The bell tower prescribed an auditory space that corresponded to a particular notion of territoriality" (95).

[69] While this description also displays elements of "sinister" sound, primarily because it is made by a single source, it seems to display more characteristics of the intrusive sound.

identified by health professionals since the 19th century.[70] In this passage, Turtle's body is threatened by the sound and she is frightened as it wraps itself around her. Thus the sound is not only imperial by Schafer's standards, it is also very much intrusive by Bijsterveld's. This kind of noise is significant because its work extends beyond a mere invasion of acoustic space; it intrudes upon the entire physical space of the listener, not just the ears, and threatens to *consume* her completely, with jaws agape. In this way, Viramontes creates a connection between the QA and the earthmovers: both have the power to physically uproot the people of the community, a power that Viramontes represents in each through noise.

What can the characters of the novel do in the face of such destruction and dislocation? How can the characters' own voices possibly compete with the imperial and intrusive noises that surround them? They frequently avoid trying; they respond to one another not with words, but with silence. Bridget Kevane argues that "A level of silence[…] permeates the action of the novel[…]. [The characters] remain as isolated and fragmented as the freeways that made their way into Los Angeles[…], carving up communities and displacing people forever" (27). Although she doesn't expand on this idea, it is clear that, for Kevane, the people of the barrio become the silent colonized within Viramontes's allegory of conquest. However, these moments are as much a result of the mechanical noises as they are silent reflections of them. The silences themselves, then, become imperial, battling with sirens and bulldozers for aural space within the

[70] Related to the idea of sound having a physical power over people is its increasing use in warfare today. Highly focused sound (that travels like a beam of light or laser, as opposed to spreading across the entire surrounding area) at high volumes can be quite debilitating. Turtle's experience seems to represent the type of complete physical inability that this kind of technology creates. For more, see the Discovery Channel's series *Future Weapons*, Season 1, "Future Shock."

novel. When read in this light, it is easy to endorse Kevane's argument that the novel offers no hope for the community - that "*Their Dogs* is a modern prayer to a world gone mad" (24).

While I value Kevane's insight and understand it to be, in part, true, I contend that Viramontes's characters have more to offer each other than their silences, despite their being ultimately caught in the tragedy of demolition and displacement.[71] Rather than allow themselves to become merely results of the sonic and physical damage to their community (to be conquered, so to speak) Viramontes's characters sometimes respond by finding and creating their own comforting sounds, which are, as Bijsterveld defines them a positive "counterpoint of the intrusive sound" (46). Although Bijsterveld's terms are meant to help categorize machine noises exclusively, I suggest that other non-mechanical sounds such as music, language, or incidental human-made sound can fall into these categories just as easily as mechanical sounds can.

Before her removal from the barrio, Chavela responds non-verbally, but not silently, to the noise that surrounds her by creating her own, more desirable, comforting sound: "Across the jackhammering blasts and cacophony of earthmovers and over the sound of passing cars on First Street, the old woman dropped three lemon cubes in a cupful of water" (27). The sound of the lemon cubes is so subtle that it is merely an implied sound in the text,[72] a sound that the reader infers based on a visual cue, yet it is

[71] My second chapter discussed the power of silence as a potential discursive tool. In Viramontes' novel, silence tends to be non-communicative and, thereby is considered to be "destructive" (Viramontes 62).

[72] Rick Altman used the term "implied sound" when talking about the sounds in film that the viewer expects to hear (and in some cases *thinks* she hears) based on the image that the camera shot presents (From Altman's graduate seminar titled "Classical Hollywood Film Sound," spring, 2009). Although I haven't come across any theoretical applications of "implied sound" to

significant enough to be heard over the noise of the traffic. In this instance, Chavela takes control of her sonic environment by moving the unwanted sound aside, both on the page and in the imagination, in favor of a more subtle and pleasing sound of her own creation – the thrice-repeated plop and crack of falling and breaking ice in lemonade. Thus the noises imposed upon the elderly woman become less imperial by Schafer's definition and, thereby, a little less powerful.

Ermila and her teenage friends likewise act counter to the idea that silence is the barrio's imperative and fatal response, though their conversations are frequently no more than the gossip of adolescence: "Lest they forget that silence is destructive, they pitted each other against the sorrowful and infinite solitude, each and every hour, because that's what friends *por vida* are for" (62). Their teenage conversations may seem superficial at times, but it is through their incessant talking and desire for interpersonal interactions that the girls begin to combat the silences of their community.

Reaching further beyond linguistic meaning, voice works in the novel, as a comforting sound. Tranquilina hears her father Tomás, the preacher, speak in "a baritone voice inflecting words of compassion. Not far from the field, pecan and ancient oak trees tussled as his voice rolled, a lovely voice, authoritative but melodious. As soothing as reading the Psalms. His voice lifted the drifts of soil, parted the bangs on Tranquilina's forehead" (Viramontes 200). In this passage Papa Tomás engages, through Tranquilina's memory, in an indirect confrontation with the noise of the earthmovers. As opposed to their "cacophony," Papa Tomás is "melodious." Rather than rudely uprooting and

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literature, I think it works in the same way: an aural description may not be included by the author, yet the reader understands that a particular (often familiar) sound should be imagined alongside the visual description.

removing dirt and people, Papa Tomás's voice gently "lifted the drifts of soil" and "tussled" the "pecan and ancient oak trees." His "lovely voice," though powerful enough to reach both the height of the trees and the depth of the soil, seems to be playing with these elements, rather than permanently removing them.[73] Papa Tomás's voice is a model for moving and influencing without breaking or destroying. This is especially significant to understanding the community's potential. The people of the barrio have the ability to counter the destructive mechanical noises of the freeway and the QA with their own voices, with the breath of their humanity.

Tranquilina demonstrates that she has learned this lesson from her father when, at the end of the novel, she witnesses Turtle and the McBride Boys gang as they beat Ermila's cousin Nacho just before they turn their gun on Tranquilina. Though Turtle's lips are mute and the only sound is the aching of her hand "in rising volume," Tranquilina insists on breaking the intrusive silence with her voice as she shouts "*We'rrrre not doggggs!*" (324). The young woman's pleas are ultimately unsuccessful before an oddly *silent* gun (the narrator tells that "the sharpshooters steadied their barrels," (325) but the final report is never described). Yet she attempts to use her *voice*, as her father used his, to move and influence the McBride Boys into putting an end to their own destructive role as victims of the "second conquest." It is in Tranquilina's act of sacrifice to her neighborhood that Ermila and her friends can find the possibility of a hopeful future for themselves in the barrio. They are not fated to become desperate products of the

[73] Another key feature of the comforting sound is that it "makes [the protagonist] drowsy. Tranquilina's memory of Papa Tomás continues: "Papa's words had suspended like a bridge between possibility and impossibility. She'd sat next to Mama, her eyes nearly shut, drowsy from a drunkenness of faith" (213).

machines that have broken up their neighborhood, rather they can produce their own comforting sounds (as easily as Chavela did with her ice cubes, or as Papa Tomas did with his voice) and thereby drown out the destructive, intrusive ones that have so long plagued their community.

Readers can hardly blame the characters for their defeated silences toward one another, considering the massive powers of sonic and physical displacement that are forced upon them. Though the effects of the conquest ultimately control the characters' actions, Viramontes offers moments of human euphony in the face of mechanical cacophony, allowing readers to hope that there is some strength left in the barrio.

CONCLUSION

In the summer of 2015, *The New York Times* ran two stories about airport noise. The first, from June 26th describes the noise regulations established by the community located near the East Hampton Airport, where the median home price is $2.9 million. The article notes that "the air-traveling summer set has made their once-peaceful oasis anything but." Air traffic has been prohibited between 11:00 P.M. and 7:00 A.M., with even more strict regulations for especially noisy flights. The regulations also limit "noisy aircraft," such as helicopters and jets, to only two airport uses a week, "or one takeoff and one landing" through the summer months. Because the town no longer accepts grants from the Federal Aviation Administration, it was successfully able to place such regulations on the airport. While some businesses in town note that these regulations inhibit the town economy, many others are grateful for the regulations. As the chairwoman for the Quiet Skies Coalition, "a residents' group that supports the airport restrictions," stated, people who choose to fly into East Hampton "don't really value what's here for what it is, or they wouldn't come that way. It's like littering in your own yard."

The second headline, from July 30th reads: "Construction Plans for La Guardia Airport Don't Faze Its Neighbors." Residents interviewed for the piece conceded, "What was a little construction on top of the aural challenges – the roaring jet engines, the chop of helicopter rotors, the incessant highway traffic – that they had already contended with and apparently overcome?" The article describes a contrasting neighborhood to that of the one located near the East Hampton Airport: "modest two-and three- story homes," and the accompanying images include chain-linked fences, cars parked on the street side,

traffic cones and plastic lawn furniture sitting in a yard. One resident said, "If it's noisy, I'm used to it [. . .]. It's progress."

How does one community gain the power to make airport-related noise adhere to its residents' typical sleep schedules, while another accepts the noise as a permanent part of the neighborhood soundscape? How does one community come to hear noise as intrusive and detrimental, while the other hears it as normal and necessary? What are the implications of each thought process; and what do we, as readers, learn about the cultural contexts, privileges, and disadvantages from which these processes derive? Although the two articles I describe above ignite such questions in 2015, they also echo much earlier lines of inquiry, to which *The Endless Roar* responds.

With this project, I aim to expand the timeline of sound studies in American literature and to make an argument for the importance of considering the nineteenth century as, if not a starting point, then a necessary point of reference for literary sound studies. I decided to examine noise, specifically, over other forms of sound (such as music, voice, the natural soundscape, etc.) because it seems to me that definitions and perceptions of noise in the nineteenth century were in an intriguing state of transformation, worthy of an attempt at understanding. My use of the definition of "Noise" as "unwanted sound," in its subjectivity, necessitates a constant consideration of how such sounds might be interpreted, and by whom. However, I have not considered any and all "unwanted sounds" in the texts that I examine. By way of bringing a sense of focus to *The Endless Roar*, I have discussed primarily those noises that are produced by technologies, both instrumental and mechanical. I also have lent an ear to how characters and their authors respond to such unwanted sounds as a way of recognizing why it is that

certain sounds are unwanted, and as a way of identifying the authors' purposes in writing about noise.

Through this process, I have demonstrated that noise helps to construct, and reconstruct, a sense of place or location. Melville's narrator, for example, does not know "Where stands the mill?" until he hears it. Likewise, the sound of the freeway classifies the barrio as a neighborhood of people whose incomes do not allow for quietude. Noise also helps to construct a sense of character identity: how the character identifies him or herself, how characters identify each other, and how the reader identifies characters. The Italian boy, for example, is marked as "other" or "outside" the more privileged classes by the noise, music to Clifford's ears, which they associate with him. In this way, the texts I examine demonstrate a sense of "acoustic regionalism" or "acoustic local color." In other instances, external noises help characters to define themselves, or, perhaps more accurately, what they hope not to be. This is most clearly revealed through Frank Norris's ranchers, who define their position in contrast to that of the locomotive and its associated noises, and Elizabeth Stuart Phelps' mill workers, who combat the noise of the machines with their songs. In this type of negative identification of self, the characters demonstrate their opposition to the homogenization of sounds. As the train with its "hollow diapason" spread westward and the mills with their "steady overruling hum" opened across the American northeast, the characters of the novels I examine reveal their commitment to the preservation of the acoustic locale.

Each of my chapters targets a different type of noise: the "undomesticated music" of the street and commerce, the noise of industry and labor, and the "imperial" noise of colonialism, which I believe extends into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The

first chapter, "'But listen!': Noise and Nation in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables*," considers noise from a perspective of what I term "literary acoustic realism," which defines those ordinary sounds that, more than the diegetic sounds which set the scene, carry extraordinary interpretive weight. Thus, the otherwise mundane ring of a shop bell comes to signify both Hepzibah's family's fall from prosperity into poverty and Hepzibah's own captivity, too. Chapter two, "'The music of industry and enterprize': Herman Melville, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, and the Noise of the Factory," works with the term, "acoustic labor." If labor is defined as "Bodily or mental exertion particularly when difficult, painful, or compulsory; (hard) work; toil; *esp*. physical toil (*Oxford English Dictionary* 2.a.), then "acoustic labor" represents those sounds, made by the laborer, which can be heard during, or as a result of, acts of labor. "Acoustic labor," therefore, offers an acoustic space for evaluating the human response to the loud machines that might otherwise overpower such lower profile sounds. Moreover, acoustic labor occurs when sounds themselves contribute to the labor of their creator. In Phelps' *The Silent Partner*, the mill workers' acoustic labor comes in the form of their singing, which they use to challenge the noise of the machines. Thus, the workers' secondary "labor" becomes combatting the noise, and the song they raise aids in their efforts. My third chapter, "'A vague note of terror': Frank Norris and the Sound of Imperialism" deals, in part, with the idea of "acoustic time." I use this phrase to describe those sounds that occupy a space over a period of time. While the clamor of the train inhabits a great amount of acoustic space on the ranch, the trickle of the fountain, centuries old, occupies a great amount of acoustic time. Through each chapter, these terms help me to better understand and convey to my reader the nature of the literary noises I examine.

The Industrial Revolution brought about enormous changes in the ways in which people access, listen to, and regarded sound. In many ways, twenty-first century American culture is still figuring out how to live with and interpret those changes, at the same time that new alterations to our listening practices are immerging. Indeed, our natural soundscape is changing. In an article written for *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Jennifer Howard discusses the soundscape ecology research of "composer-turned-researcher" Bernard L. Krause, which demonstrates that "Soundscapes – the collective sounds that can be perceived in specific locales – are under threat, especially those in the ever-shrinking wild." As the *New York Times* articles quoted above suggest, air traffic plays a role in that threat. However, not only are our soundscapes changing over time, but we are also making significant changes to our individual soundscapes on a daily basis. People block out their natural soundscapes with earphones, creating their own carefully cultivated audioscapes. Likewise, a renewed enthusiasm for listening to texts, as evidenced through such websites as www.audible.com, may change, again, how people access the printed word. Although some of these changes offer cause for concern, I like to imagine the possibility that the new ways of hearing the world will alter the literature of the future just, as I have argued through *The Endless Roar*, it infiltrated the literature of the past. By listening to the literature of the past, we, as readers, might better prepare ourselves to understand the literature of the future.

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