

**Kirstie A. Dorr**, *On Site, In Sound: Performance Geographies in América Latina*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2018. ISBN: 978-0-8223-6855-7 (cloth); ISBN: 978-0-8223-6867-0 (paper); ISBN: 978-0-8223-7265-3 (ebook)

In an ambitious project that seeks to reimagine the sociospatial roles of the sonic, Kirstie Dorr, Associate Professor of Ethnic Studies at the University of California, San Diego, brings her background in the fields of critical race, gender, and queer studies, human geography, and sound and performance studies together in *On Site, In Sound*. By looking at “South American musical transits” – how the sonic is transposed in different geohistorical contexts – Dorr effectively disrupts colonial definitions of musical cultures as being tied to place. Her approach points to the roles and uses of sound in a Latin American context. Some other contemporary scholars have done this in Latinx studies, with Gaye Theresa Johnson’s *Spaces of Conflict, Sounds of Solidarity* (2013), Deborah Vargas’ *Dissonant Divas in Chicana Music* (2012), and Alex Chávez’s *Sounds of Crossing* (2017) coming to mind. Dorr’s book, undoubtedly, adds to this growing field of literature on sound and space.

Key to Dorr’s framework of “South American musical transits” is the three-pronged approach, as she details, of listening, “musicking”, and performance. Listening refers to the actual sonic and emotive qualities of the musical text. Musicking, a term coined by ethnomusicologist Christopher Smalls (1998), refers to the practices of musical production beyond the musical text itself, such as listening and rehearsing. Lastly, performance allows us to see the embodiment of musical texts that reveals social and spatial interactions of reception. With a particular emphasis on performance geographies, a concept borrowed from Caribbeanist Sonjah Stanley Niaah (2010), who looked the role of Jamaican dancehall music in creating “life-giving” transformatory performance space in Kingston’s inner-cities and transforming meanings of the “urban ghetto”, Dorr shows the ability of music and performance to reshape notions of space and time, and how musical transits can become productive sites for counter-knowledge production.

In Chapter 1, Dorr looks at multiple performance geographies of “El Condór Pasa”, an Andean folk tune that has been reproduced and recontextualized to lay specific spatial claims. During 1913 in Lima, the tune debuted as part of a *zarzuela* (musical play) and had in its core an aim to redress legacies of Spanish colonialization and include elements of Peruvian *indigenismo* to unite the rural and urban in Peru to create a new, modern national identity that included the indigenous and mestizo. Later on, the tune became appropriated by US duo Simon & Garfunkel as they stumbled across it in Europe and re-recorded/-released it to great commercial success. Through the international attention garnered, Simon & Garfunkel’s popularization of “El Condór Pasa” in 1969 simultaneously erased and perpetuated colonial legacies by creating the notion of the global North “saving” purportedly dying music from the global South. As Dorr states, this renders the unequal relations of power between the artists invisible, since the relations of power such projects come to represent – “most notably neoimperialism and imperialist nostalgia [through the exoticization of folkloric music], racist love and racial violence” (p.45) – are lost on Western audiences, and lays spatial claims to a world music geography tethered to 20<sup>th</sup> century capitalism, naturalizing an “international division of musical labor” (p.61).

However, this specific spatial claim asserted by communities of the World Music industry did not go uncontested. In mid-century New York, migrant musicians such as Yma Sumac continued the musical transit of “El Condór Pasa”, by using their performance geographies to contest imperialist nostalgia and the ways that the World Music industry tried to “discover” and “save” primitive sonic traditions of the global South. Dorr “listen[s] against” (p.47) dominant analyses of Sumac’s musicking, which saw her as “primitive, exotic, and sexually available” (p.53), and instead pays attention to the critical sonic work she does, including her 1971 re-recording of “El Condór Pasa”. Sumac’s recording, which was experimental and called space-age and psychedelic, was not critically acclaimed, with critics saying that it lacked the simplicity and tradition of the original folkloric tune. Dorr problematizes this by introducing Vargas’ concept of dissonance – a “feminist, antiracist, and queer hermeneutic” (p. 56) that pays attention to performative disruptions and reconfigurations of normative conventions.

Thus, analyzing Sumac's performance through the lens of dissonance allows us to privilege the conscientious ways of disobedience and see the power in her performance geography as a way to intervene in racist masculinist discourses and the World Music industry where appropriation of "traditional" folk songs by Western artists like Simon & Garfunkel was celebrated as remarkable discovery, whereas efforts by indigenous singers like Sumac to experiment with folk songs were deemed misguided and inappropriate, especially in dominant North American understandings.

*On Site, In Sound* emerges from a long and multidisciplinary genealogy of critical spatial thinkers whom Dorr mentions in her introduction, including but not limited to Ruth Wilson Gilmore, Katherine McKittrick, Linda Peake, Neil Smith, George Lipsitz, and Doreen Massey, and becomes a part of the critical studies scholarship itself. While Dorr explicitly draws from feminist and antiracist scholars and reveals the spatial nature of the sonic, and vice versa, she also reveals opportunities for change and the ways in which people have asserted claims to the contested nature of space through music. Especially salient on this point are Chapters 2 and 4.

In Chapter 2, Dorr looks at indigenous migrant communities in California partaking in the "Andean Music Industry", the US-based informal economy of Andean musical production. Here, musicians, such as those in the band Markahuasi, used their performance geographies to challenge notions of "public" space, as their performances at Union Square in San Francisco subverted racial- and class-related ideas of the urban cityscape, and revealed the oft-concealed undocumented migrant labor population in a primarily white and upper-class area. In Chapter 4, when looking at grassroots cultural organizing in the Mission District in San Francisco, Dorr reveals that participants laid not only cultural and diasporic claims to space through sound, but also queer ones as well. Through participating in the *peña*, traditionally a popular meeting place for musicians in Latin America, the founder, Alejandro Stuart, and community members were able to use musicking to challenge heteronormative boundaries, creating what Dorr calls "socio-sonic geographies of opposition" (p.172).

On this note, Chapter 3 also proves to be a delectable read, as Dorr draws on Black feminist theories to look at Afro-Peruviana artists with a rich historical and materialist approach.

Intricately woven to her analysis are the relationships between the Black Arts Revival movement in Peru, Black liberation struggles in the United States and continental Africa, as well as pan-Americanist social movements in the 1960s. Dorr's analysis of Victoria Santa Cruz's reading of "*Me Gritaron Negra*", "poetic storytelling and choreographed gesture with rhythmic accompaniment and choral antiphony" (p.117), coupled with her extensive archival research, reveals how through a "rhythmic consciousness" (p.116) Santa Cruz respatialized dominant tropes of race and gender for empowerment, and therefore showed how sound is signified by, but can contest, racially mapped bodies in a gendered way.

In this chapter, Dorr also disrupts epistemological and local/global boundaries by looking at the similarities between the Black experience among the Americas to show how there are similarities on an international scale, in a progressive attempt to look at the implications of slavery in the context of "Latin American nation building" (p.142). She argues that the focus on the United States, Europe, the French- and English-speaking Caribbean, and continental Africa in Black diasporic studies, is a form of US exceptionalism, and calls for renewed attention to the "many Pacific and continental locations of Black diasporicity in Latin America and much of the Spanish-speaking Caribbean" (p.142), presenting ways in which Black Peruvian music problematizes dominant world music geographies and studies on the Black Atlantic, asserting a need to look at the Black Pacific when looking at Afro-diasporic cultures.

However, precisely because of the immense scope of the book, both disciplinarily as well as in terms of the multiple geohistorical contexts Dorr details, a few areas could have been enriched with more depth. More focused engagement with Latin American ethnomusicology and cultural studies literature would have proven beneficial, especially with key concepts such as Ana Maria Ochoa Gautier's (2006) "aural public sphere" and Néstor García Canclini's (2005) "cultural hybridity", in order to avoid the purification of distinct Latin American musical histories (what García Canclini contends with), which is highly essentializing. In the fourth chapter about La Peña del Sur, an analysis of the histories of the Nueva Canción would have also been fruitful, since the founder was a Chilean exile, and because the Nueva Canción had a very particular sociopolitical history that manifested most strongly under Salvador Allende's

dictatorship in Chile, before it became a more widespread musical strategy and genre in the Americas. In the discussion about public space in the Mission District in San Francisco, looking at how the public performers themselves, and the public watching the performance, understood the musical production would have been invaluable additions, given that they are key in Ochoa Gautier's concept of the "aural public sphere" and Dorr's goal to continue decolonial understandings of Latin American music. This would have also allowed Dorr to explain how people's ideas of class and race were (or were not) subverted through the performance, since they could have arguably been reinforced. George Yúdice's *The Expediency of Culture* (2003) could have also warranted a mention when looking at the use of culture and music in a contemporary context, since Yúdice looked at the need to perform notions of identity in order to gain resources and saw culture and cultural production as having expedient properties.

Overall, *On Site, In Sound* is a rare and invaluable book that brings into critical colloquy the fields of ethnomusicology, critical geography, ethnic studies, performance studies, and gender studies. By drawing from key theorists in each field and using archival research as well as musicological and cultural analyses, Dorr successfully shows how "sonic production and spatial formation are mutually animating processes" (p.3), addressing her astute observation that the social natures of space and place remain an undertheorized area in discussions of music. The book is a great read of undoubtedly great use for scholars in the aforementioned fields of study, or to any student who wants to learn about the spatially transformative powers of sound and music, or more about Peruvian culture in general, although a degree of familiarity with either Latin American cultural studies or critical geography is recommended. Dorr's book is rigorously grounded in the works of important critical scholars, and calls for a renewed and interdisciplinary conversation in order to answer why, as Dorr states, "You can't have a revolution without songs" (p.1).

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Nathan Siu-Fung Cheung  
Department of Latin American Studies  
University of California, Los Angeles  
nsfcheung@ucla.edu

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