Listening to Sonic Memory at the Museum—Decolonial Archives in the Making
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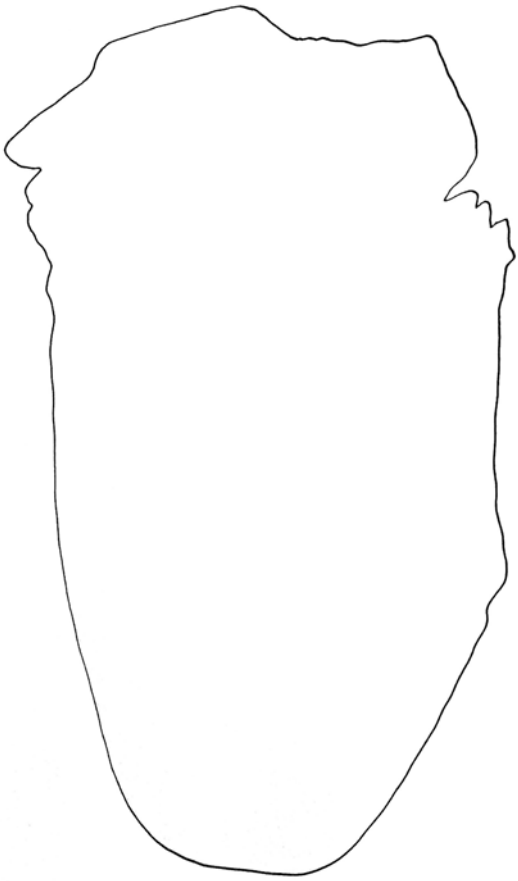


The Sound of Postcolonial Memories

At the National Museum of Immigration History in Paris (MNHI), the exhibition *Paris-London: Music Migrations 1962–1989* focuses on how migrations have impacted urban cultural changed in European metropoles, such as Paris and London. Music combines various kinds of knowledge—of language, sounds as commons, and oral histories—as well as personal narratives. As a cultural practice, music stands for memory transmission and thus remains a substantial tool of self-expression and empowerment.

Listening to sonic memory, this essay aims not only to retrace the past but also, above all, to question historical narratives in the making of exhibitions. It critically analyzes curatorial discourses and is a curatorial research endeavor in itself, which in turn underscores an epistemology of listening to material culture. Listening to sonic memories pursues a metaphorical dialogue between my own experience as a viewer while doing research in the field with the objects I encountered on display. I focus here on the sonic quality of narrating in songs as a matter of making political claims and of critical action towards social injustices in society. Listening as a research strategy emphasizes the agency of objects as they carry narratives of ordinary life.

Furthermore, this essay underscores self-documentation and listening to artistic practices as guidance for the emergence of strategies critical of museums. It draws from situated feminist and decolonial approaches, which have criticized the predominance of the gaze and the national museum as embedded in the legacy of colonial knowledge as a means of power.

As a journey through sonic cultural memories, the essay aims to challenge Eurocentric assumptions about the representations of citizenship belonging. Asking how research on museum exhibitions might listen to the complex voices and transformative hybridity of citizenships, this study understands the visibility and orality of postcolonial France as a means of contesting cultural and political modes of imperial domination inherited from colonization.[1]

Capturing the public's imagination listening to sounds can trigger the memory.

1 *Speaking of "postcolonial France" underlines an understanding of France as encompassing a heterogeneous set of subject positions being shaped in (post)colonial entanglements. Thus, this notion undertakes a critique of Western historicism based on the idea of collective memory and nationhood. Since World War II, historians have used the notion of the "postcolonial state" to develop chronological understandings of the postindependence period. See* Ashcroft, Bill, Griffiths, Gareth, and Tiffin, Helen, *eds.*, Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts, *London/New York 2000/2007, p. 168. Nevertheless, the theorization of the "postcolonial" began primarily in comparative literature studies in the late 1970s as Edward Said's* Orientalism *(1978) began to have an impact on intellectuals. Postcolonial critique discusses the "various cultural effects of colonization" (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 2000/2007, p. 168). According to Rajeev S. Patke, the "postcolonial" has become "the sign of recognition for the inequalities that beset new nationhood after the end of colonialism in an era of uneven industrialisation and globalization." See Patke, Rajeev S., "Postcolonial Cultures,"* Theory, Culture & Society, *vol. 23, no. 2–3, 2006, p.369 -372, p. 369. At the same time, the social landscape of the former colonial nation was transformed by postcolonial migrations. Speaking of "postcolonial France" in the sense suggested by Paul A. Silverstein allows one to address issues of social injustices, such as the unresolved tensions of France's imperial-colonial projects, which have led to urban marginalization, police violence, and institutional discrimination to the present day. See Silverstein, Paul A.*, Postcolonial France, *New York 2018.*

It is not surprising that MNHI has now dedicated an exhibition to music as crucial part of migratory life experiences. According to the curatorial statement in the exhibition catalogue, from the early 1960s to the late 1980s many musical trends linked to movements of migration transformed Paris and London into "multicultural capitals." The exhibition *Paris-London: Music Migrations* offers an immersive and chronological journey through three decisive decades (from 1962 to 1989) of the musical history of those two cities. In revisiting pop music history, as one of the co-curators Angélique Escarfé-Dublet, puts it, the exhibition highlights an encounter of musical rhythms between social, urban, and political transformations and successive migratory flows that marked the period. In addition, the exhibition sheds light on music practices that have in turn contributed to the making of political resistance in urban spaces by fighting for social justice.[2]

The curatorial concept of the exhibition invites the audience to listen to music as a practice of cultural memory that retraces the history of immigration, despite the topic's marginalization and neglect. It can thus be seen as a response to Ahmed Boubeker and Abdellali Hajjat's book *Histoire politique des immigrations (post)coloniales en France, 1920–2008* (2008) in claiming these forgotten histories as the intersection of various political struggles, from the wars of independence to civil rights movements and the social struggles of the postwelfare state.[3] Whether political or intimate, the sonic memory contained in music makes possible an experience of return to an earlier generation and place. However, in this exhibition no particular emphasis is put on sound in general, and especially of women, thereby undermining its perception. And this is the case despite the fact that singing by women played a significant role in the Algerian war of independence and despite the significance of transmitting this legacy among the Algerian diaspora in France.[4]

Despite several "stereo" stations with headphones (equipped with Walkmans or other listening devices from the three decades covered in the exhibition) and sound shower installations, sonic experiences remain infrequent in this exhibition. Most of the music devices displayed appear as muted objects. One could ask: what is the point of making an exhibition about the legacy of music as form of counterdiscourse within social and political struggles if there are only limited possibilities to listen to the testimonies of past social movements? Highlighting living memories and their archives in conversation with objects at the museum, I undertake a shift in dismantling the imagined community embedded in the nationalist representation of "Frenchness" and the values of citizenship encompassed in whiteness.[5] Listening to sonic memories on display calls for a (de)constructive take

2 *"Introduction—Conscience, émancipation et révolte: La musique comme rapport au monde," in Escarfé-Dublet, Angélique, Evan, Martin, and Malfette, Stéphane, eds.*, Paris Londre: Musique migrations, *exhibition catalogue, Musée de l'histoire de l'immigration, Paris, Paris 2019.* **3** *Boubeker, Ahmed and Hajjat, Abdellali,* Histoire politique des immigrations (post)coloniales: France, 1920–2008, *Paris 2008.* **4** *X, Kahina, "AVRIDH D'AVRIDH—ce qui est juste est juste," in Boubeker and Hajjat 2008 (note 3), pp. 301–312.* **5** *Anderson, Benedict,* Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism, *London/New York 1983/1991; Citron, Suzanne,* Le Mythe national: l'Histoire de France revisitée, *Paris 1987/2017; Guily, Elsa, "Unpacking the Sonic Memory: Between Familial and the Museum, Remembering the French Revolution Bicentenary,"* entanglements, *vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 56–73.*

to displace representations of memory in the public sphere or to "occupy the space of the museum," as Nora Sternfeld's institutional critique of the museum suggests.[6] This entails making critical interventions on and around museum collections and displays that individually sense the multiplicities of postcolonial perspectives and furthermore "undermine[] … the pretensions of nation-states as politically bounded territories marking the limits of … homogenous cultural communities."[7] Listening to sonic memories seeks to address the museum display as a place of imagination bridging the past from one's present. What if the museum were to engage in designing a polyphonic-sonic landscape that could enable different memories of migrations to circulate and echo with one another, as though they were undertaking a collective discussion that would share experiences? What if the silence of these memories were also a subversive strategy of resistance? Is the museum the place for them to speak out at all?

According to Nikita Dhawan, listening is one step in decolonizing practices but cannot be the final achievement—on the contrary, listening as a strategy can also ultimately reproduce hegemonic "norms of recognition."[8] Dhawan sees silences, as an "ethical-political imperative," as a strategy of resistance against the backdrop of those who have undertaken to speak for the "illegible and unintelligible within hegemonic frameworks."[9] In responding to Gayatri Spivak's *Can the Subaltern Speak,* Dhawan suggests "the process of speaking on behalf of someone else entails elements of interpretation."[10] Thereby, Dhawan argues, it is crucial that one continually make transparent the process of representation, namely, not only who represents, but also who is represented for what purpose and at which historical moment: "The responsibility of representation raises the question of who will be the 'legitimate' voice of the 'marginalized' … this comes with the challenge of how to ethically and imaginatively inhabit other people's narrative."[11] According to Dhawan, what is to be learned from this critique, shared among other postcolonial feminists, is that "instead of focusing on the supposed voicelessness of the marginalized it is more crucial to scandalize the inability of the 'dominant.'"[12]

The elaboration of a process of thinking the exhibition together with artistic practices that guide the memory work by listening to postcolonial sonic memories makes it possible to retrace cultural history and the history of knowledge. Listening back to the sound of visual documents implements a disruption of historical dichotomies of the museum's display and, on a larger scale, within collective memory in France. Music of postcolonial migration struggles carries

6 *Sternfeld Nora,* Das radikaldemokratische Museum, *Berlin 2018.* **7** *Hargreaves, Alec G. and McKinney, Mare, eds.,* Post-colonial Culture in France, *London and New York 1997, p. 11.* **8** *Dhawan, Nikita, "Hegemonic Listening and Subversive Silences: Ethical-Political Imperatives," in Lagaay, Alice and Lorber, Michael, eds.,* Destruction in the Performative, Critical Studies *36, The Netherlands 2012, pp. 7–60.* **9** *Dhawan 2012 (note 8), p. 47.* **10** *Dhawan 2012 (note 8), p. 47.* **11** *Dhawan 2012 (note 8), p. 5.* **12** *Dhawan 2012 (note 8), p. 51.*

social memories, linking the present to its past and imagining a future that disrupts social order as well as processes of marginalization based on ethnicity, religion, or gender bias. Sonic memories can, in turn, counter-hegemonic historical narratives and propose to write history differently, in a decentered and complex way.

Popular Music as Sonic Cultural Memory

Memory and materiality entangled in art and popular culture are integral aspects of remembering.[13] Objects do not tell their story as such, but their materiality linked to the viewer's memory and perception enables the viewer to connect with a broader set of knowledges and narratives beyond the discursive framing of the museum. Popular music offers an even wider perspective on the question of memory representation and transmission. It appears as a precious universal vehicle of cultural practices and social realities. However, its preservation and conservation by museums and institutional archives remain underestimated. The mnemonic quality of music calls for us to dwell on sensory research of memory objects. For instance, a vinyl record or a tape combine sonic, visual, and haptic features. One can listen to music recorded on the medium, touch the object, or look at the written or visual information on its cover (its semiotics), etc. As material objects of sonic memory, vinyl records as well as tapes carry this function of performing memory, thereby inscribing the act of remembrance into the material world. Our various human senses remain of primary importance in our capacity of remembering but remain underestimated in museography. Sound is a crucial channel of knowledge transmission in many cultures. This inquiry argues that culture can be analyzed by listening to sounds and by looking at the regimes of sensory affect around the objects of memory.[14] Listening as a practice of research deals with a cultural understanding of sounds not merely as semiotic or signifying processes but as material, physical, and sensory processes that integrate a multitude of traditions and forms of knowledge.

The approach to listening I draw from relates to two interconnected fields of practices—collective feminist projects and art practices as research of cultural memory. I understand artistic "memory work" as a process of research engaging with the past in both an ethical and political quest toward history.[15] When we work with a pre-existent body of objects, such as archives or museum collections, we construct a literary, cinematographic, sonic, or historical narrative based on sensory interpretations of our object of study. By focusing on the sensing and affect encountered while working with data collections, the practice of listening in research renews methods of quotation and paraphrasing, cutting, and editing to produce a frame of enunciation that allows the object of research to constitute itself as a subject (the agency of the object).[16] I suggest that, with a bit of

13 *Muntean, Laszlo, Plate, Liedeke, and Smelik, Anneke, eds.*, Materializing Memory in Art and Popular Culture, *New York 2017.* **14** *Papenburg, Jen G. and Schulze, Holger,* Sound as Popular Culture, *London/Cambridge 2016.* **15** *Kuhn, Anette, "Memory Texts and Memory Work: Performances of Memory,"* Memory Studies, *vol. 3, no. 4, 2010, pp. 1–16.* **16** *Pink, Sarah,* Doing Sensory Ethnography, *London 2009/2015; Pink, Sarah, Hubbard, Phil, O'Neill, Maggie and Radley, Alan, "Walking Across Disciplines: From Ethnography to Arts Practice,"* Visual Studies, *vol. 25, no. 1, March 22, 2010, pp. 1–7.*

imagination and a research approach based in this renewal, it is possible to listen to the memories carried by muted objects, to touch the sonic dimension of oral history, whether these memories are represented, only quietly, by an instrument, an archival document, or a photograph.

I argue that listening enables us to render visible sounds and their meaning. Alternating moments of writing and listening improves ways of thinking and making arguments. As sounds are nonlinear, the listening experience enhances our capacity of making connections, by creating relations to different perceptible elements.[17] My interpretation of the museum display is based both on my field analysis and on how I work with the data collection carried out while visiting the museum's exhibition. The following part of my essay focuses on an exhaustive close reading of sonic memories embodied in objects on display in the MNHI exhibition.

The Vinyl Covers—Listen to My Story

In one part of the exhibition, several vinyl covers hang on an orange wall next to each other. A cover showing the photographic portrait of the singer Noura hangs next to other vinyl covers of key figures from the (post)Algerian music scene (such as Slimane Azeem, Mazouni, and Dahmane El-Harrachi).[18] The vinyl carries both a functional and aesthetic use as a material object. The cover becomes a visual document, which advertises the music and helps to conserve the record. Yet those artifacts stand only as a cultural representation of the past; one cannot listen to it live in the exhibition.

Noura is one of the icons of Algerian music and a symbol of independence resistance standing for the struggle of postcolonial migrations in France. Despite her notoriety, her voice remains silenced by the exhibition. Together with Kamal Hamadi, who is the author and composer of her songs, as well as her husband, Noura has contributed to the popularization of Kabyle, Oranese, and Auresian music styles. In 1959 she made her way to the French capital to become a singer. Singing in Arabic, Kabyle, and French, Noura created a repertoire of songs about experiences of love and exile, performing at Parisian cabarets that brought together Algerian immigrant artists in the 1960s and 1970s. Her music was a great success among the North African diaspora, and in 1971 she received a gold record by Pathé Marconi for her sales in France. Throughout the 1970s, she also recorded Scopitones, the famous color video clips available in Algerian bars, and she continued her career on both sides of the Mediterranean. Yet the biography of the singer remains absent from the display. Only her photographic portrait on the cover is to be seen.

17 *Oliveros refers to this listening experience as having "sonic memory" while listening to her surroundings to enhance her creative writing. Sonic memories are the images that appear in her mind while she is thinking; in other words, they are analogies enabled by multisensory awareness. Oliveros, Pauline, "Some Sound Observation," in Warner, Christophe and Cox, Daniel, eds.*, Audio Culture: Reading in Modern Culture, *New York/London 2004, pp. 102–106.* **18** *Born Fatima-Zohra Badji, from Cherchell, Algeria, Noura made her debut early on Radio Alger. "She makes a name for herself by performing in plays and operettas. She quickly established herself as one of the greatest Algerian singers of the time," says researcher Naïma Yahi, paying tribute to the singer. Yahi, Naïma and Amokrane, Salah, "Noura ou le patrimoine culturel de l'immigration,"* Telerama, *https://www.telerama.fr/idees/noura-ou-le-patrimoine-culturel-de-l-immigration,113399.php (accessed May 18, 2020).*

Listen to Noura—"Laou Nehki Ya Ness"/"Ana Ouemma" (youtu.be/A_ThL5CJRlY)

Listen to Noura—"Koulha Oussadou" (youtu.be/rwa9cAWFGSc)

The musicians whose covers are hanging next to Noura's are treated similarly. Despite the fact that these artists are probably the authors of the most emblematic hit songs in the 1970s, which denounce racist violence, the exploitation of migrant labor, and unsanitary housing conditions, none of their lyrics and sonic experiences can be listened to in the exhibition, nor are their biographies being told. Slimane Azeem, Mazouni, and Dahmane El-Harrachi, as well as Noura among other key figures, share the collective experience of migrating from Algeria to France, but under different conditions and under different (citizenship) treats. Yet their stories are not available for listening within the display; they remain a mere "image" of the (im)migrant.

With his single, "L'ouvrier," Mazouni is probably the first of these artists whose songs empowered the Algerian and postcolonial industrial workers and who supported their social struggles for a better life in France.[19]

Listen to Mazouni—"L'ouvrier" (vimeo.com/75450672)

Even if we cannot hear the song, a viewer can nevertheless see its embodiment in one of the sonic memory treasures shown in the exhibition, namely, the Scopitone. One of these peculiar machines stands in the corner of a room, facing the vinyl covers hanging on the wall. Unfortunately, the viewer is warned not to touch the Scopitone. Only the soft sounds of a few songs that used to be played on the device come out of the side-mounted speakers. Made in France around 1960, the Scopitone is a film jukebox, based on Soundies (musical 16mm film), the ancestor of music videos. The Scopitone movies were B&W or color 16mm film projections of lip-syncing performers that were played along with a magnetic soundtrack. People used to gather in bars and cafés to listen and watch popular music videos in the late 1960s with this technology. The Scopitone was used to play songs of migratory life experiences and let the voices of those artists circulate in public spaces, generating collective experiences and discussions. However, despite the valuable social dimension of this technology, the museum has chosen to mute the object as a nostalgic stone of the past, a kind of mausoleum placed here in a topological function to express a forgotten history.

Like the music titles mentioned above, Mazouni's song provides a sense of belonging to those whose migratory realities were to be renegotiated by the 1973 laws that made a resident card *(carte de résidence)* mandatory for immigrants to stay and workin France. Since unemployment was gradually erupting into the labor market following the oil crisis that began in October 1973, this was not coincidental. The new law worsened the working conditions to restrict the circulation of migrant workers in France. The cheap postcolonial labor was no longer required by the state to foster the industrial economy. A few years later, in 1979, Slimane

19 *Mazouni, "L'ouvrier," at 4'06" in the film* Trésors de Scopitones arabes kabyles et berbères *(52 minutes), director: Michèle Collery, 1999.*

Azem and Nouredine Meziane released their song "La Carte De Residence."[20]

Listen to Slimane Azem and Noureddine Meziane—"La Carte de Résidence" (youtu.be/iE-88XDwJ2g)

Mazouni and Slimane Azem have remained well known among the first and second generations of the migrant community of Algeria. Nevertheless, one song by Dhamane El Harrachi, "Ya rayah" (1973), gained even more success, reaching a broader audience among the offspring of many other postmigrant generations in France.[21]

Listen to Dhamane El Harrachi—"Ya Rayah" (youtu.be/4Z9plRx8dSY)

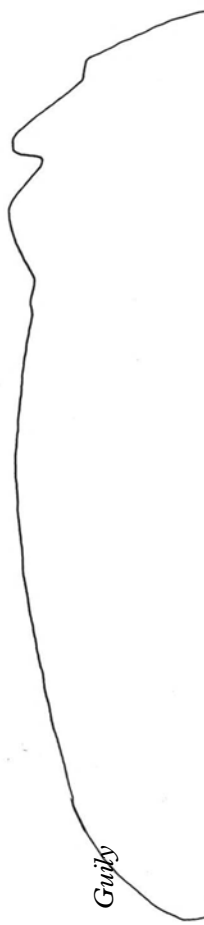
"Ya Rayah" (in Arabic: "the one who is leaving") addresses the hardship of exile. The song contrasts the experience of the immigrant worker with those who stayed in the homeland and dreamed of leaving. It was a great success upon its release in France in 1973 and has remained
a hit up to my generation thanks to Rachid Taha's cover version in 1997.

Listen to Rachid Taha—"Ya Rayah" (youtu.be/vBu2OXGWBFI)

This journey into music migrations opens a vast repertoire of music from postcolonial migrant lives, which in the 1970s already provided audible access to the personal and collective experiences of ordinary racism and labor exploitation. These songs embody living memories of an endless struggle that had started long ago, before the history of immigration toward France and which is entangled into power relations established in colonialism. These sonic memories link the colonial pastto the present of postcolonial France and thus emphasize postcolonialism as a burning socioeconomic issue in France.

Decolonial Archive in the Making—Thinking with Artistic Practices

A program of side events, with a monthly talk followed by a concert or DJ set at the museum, accompanies the exhibition.
I got particularly interested in two artists invited in this context. The first, Nabil Djedouani, led a session about the legacy



Guilty

20 *"C'est vraiment bien dommage le racisme et le chômage / Heureusement qu'il y a des sages, c'est le prestige de la France / C'est le prestige de la France, c'est la raison d'espèrance / Le travail quand il est dur, c'est pour l'immigré biensûr / Avec la conscience pure, l'dévouement et les souffrances / L'dévouement et les souffrances, ça mérite la récompense / … / Sachez bien que mes aïeux ont combattu pour la France / Ont combattu pour la France bien avant la résidence / Mesdames, mesdemoiselles, messieurs, si nous devons vous dire adieu sachez bien que nos aïeux ont combattu pour la France / Sachez bien que nos aïeux ont combattu pour la France" Slimane Azemand Cheikh Nordine, "La carte de residence," https://quartierslibres.wordpress.com/2014/05/24/slimane-azem-cheikh-nordine-la-carte-de-residence/ (accessed December 12, 2019).* **21** *Dahmane El Harrachi moved to France in 1949, where he became an emblematic figure of chaabi music. Often using metaphors, his rocky voice lends itself very well to his repertoire, which includes themes of nostalgia for his country, the suffering of exile, and passion for his hometown, friendship, and family.*

of the pop singer Rachid Taha and his band Carte de Séjour.[22] As a film director and self-defined "Algerian Pop Culture Archaeologist," Djedouani addresses (re)collection of music as memory with a particular focus on postcolonial migration from Algeria. Djedouani is also a connoisseur of popular music genres from Algeria. Thus, he has begun to create a digital "living archive" on social media such as Instagram and Soundclound where he uploads rare and almost forgotten sonic tunes of Algerian music that have been partly produced by the Algerian diaspora.[23]

In the course of a residency as part of the "Frontière' 2019" program at the museum, he made a documentary about R.A.P (Rock Against the Police), a music festival that emerged in the 1970s in reaction to the recurring police violence in France with an increasing number of racist murders of young postcolonial migrants of the second generation.[24] The R.A.P festival has both a culturally joyful and a political activist tone, with the latter fighting against police violence and murders by the police in what are called the "banlieues." The term "banlieue" is used in media and in public discourse to signify the segregated urban spaces at the outskirts of a big city such as Paris, Lyon, or Marseille, where most of the city's population lives under socioeconomic hardships. Nabil Djedouani's project consists of searching for lost archives and retracing the narratives of the past to document this untold history of resistance against racist police violence (murders) around the practice of music in France in the late seventies in France.

Djedouani's project offers a good example for considering artistic practice as a form of research on cultural memory. To collect music, Djedouani conducts field research between Algeria and France, encountering people, conversing with and above all listening to them. The practice of listening as it is done here is an essential research method. Indeed, Djedouani listens to the social objects—film/found footage, tapes, vinyls, digging here and there, in a shop or visiting a relative. Collecting leads to an encounter with people and their stories, and to a listening to the past as it unfolds in these narratives. The objects become an intermediary making tangible the relation between one's narrative of the past and present experiences. Djedouani's practice of (re)collecting memories can be thought of as a form of documentation, in the sense suggested by Arjun Appadurai: "[D]ocumentation does not simply precede intervention but is the first step."[25]

By collecting memory, one first encounters an object. One has to think with the object: What to do with it? How to present it? The way one handles this encounter determines the archival outcome and the narrative inscribed in that process.

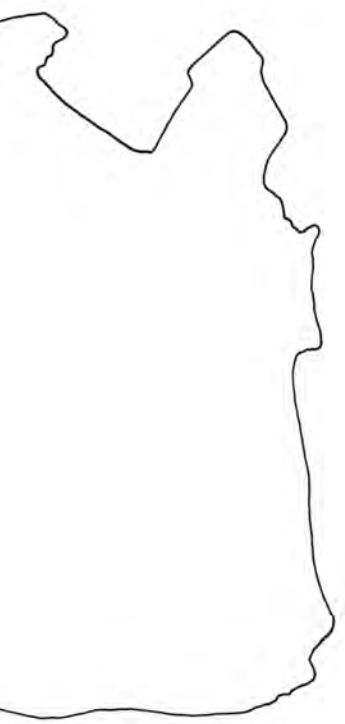
22 *The "Studio Session" arranged in the Paris-London exhibition* Music Migrations *offers a series of encounters with images and music. These included sessions with Nabil Djedouani and Dif Jemel-Jess; the DJ set of Big Cheese Records and Big Smile Bazaar on May 22, 2019; another studio session with Rocé and Naima Yahi; and the DJ set by Juicy Fruit and Rocé on October 24, 2019. For more information about the program, see the official website of MNHI, http://www.histoire-immigration.fr/agenda/2019-05/studio-sessions (accessed September 10, 2019).* **23** *Archives du Cinéma Algériens YouTube Channel, https://www.youtube.com/user/ArchivesNumCineDZ; Rai & Folk, https://soundcloud.com/raiandfolk.* **24** *These murders included that of Mohamed Diab, killed in 1972 in Versailles by the police, as well as the bomb attack at the Algerian embassy in Marseille 1973. Djedouani's documentary avant-première was shown at the MNHI in January 2020.* **25** *Appadurai, Arjun, "Archive and Aspiration," in Brouwer, Joke and Mulder, Arjen, eds.,* Information Is Alive, *Rotterdam 2003, pp. 14–25, p. 24.*

Appadurai implies documenting not (only) as a practice of preserving a trace of the past, but as a work of imagination.[26] The 'pop culture archaeologist' is collecting the pre-existing body of living archives. They emphasize parameters of imagination to create a constellation of memory using social media platforms that provide access to these materials. Even though Djedouani's recent residency has allowed him to make a documentary, he continues to be engaged in building an archive on the margins of the institution, surfing between dynamics of self-marketing and documentation. The use of these platforms questions the practice of sustainable archiving—What and how to collect? How to make the document visible, touchable, audible? What if the collection were considered more as an act of intervention than an archive of materialized documents stored in a box?

"The present is better off when it has memory."[27]

Another important example of archiving as an intervention is the recent release of the music compilation *Par les damnés de la terre* by the rapper Rocé.[28] Like Djedouani's research on living archives of the R.A.P festival, Rocé's anthology project responds to the need to give voice to past generations of musicians. Rocé used music as an expression of postcolonial political and social struggles, as a tool to embody their dissident anticolonial subject position to lead fights for independence. The compilation brings together twenty-four songs in French from all over the world. The artists include the Cameroonian Francis Bebey; the Gabonese Pierre Akendengué; the Algerian star Slimane Azem (mentioned earlier); Colette Magny, a notorious rebel who was involved in political and social struggles; the Burkinabe Abdoulaye Cissé, who became the conductor of anti-imperialist revolutionary national choirs in the 1970s and 1980s; and the Benino-Togolese Alfred Panou. Panou performed "Je suis un sauvage" in 1970, which is considered the first slam poetry piece recorded in French, accompanied by the Art Ensemble of Chicago, a free jazz group that was in Paris at the time. Together, these songs encompass a vivid testimony of sounds as memory.

Listen to Alfred Panou & Art Ensemble of Chicago—"Je suis un sauvage" (youtu.be/ckT689d629k)



26 *Appadurai 2003 (note 25), p. 24* **27** *"Le présent se débrouille mieux lorsqu'il a de la mémoire" (my translation in English), in Rocé,* Par les damnés de la terre: Des voix des luttes 1969–1988, *Paris 2018, p. 3.* **28** Par les damnés de la terre *(By the wretched of the earth), a compilation of twenty-four titles edited by Rocé and published by Hors Cadres/Modulor, contains a forty-page booklet, which richly documents the artists' biographies as well as the anticolonial struggles in which they have been involved (Rocé 2018, note 27).*

Making a documentary or a music compilation manifests the cultural heritage of postcolonial struggles in the material world and fosters the music's transmission to new generations. Indeed, this history of anticolonial struggles is largely undermined and remains untold, especially in the classroom or at the museum. A useful educational tool. Rocé's compilation highlights the voices of former colonized or/and francophone peoples of color fighting for independence and against the French racist postcolonial State.[29] A good example is the song "Déménagement" (1985) by Salah Sadaoui, which echoes Dhamane El-Harrachi's "Ya Rayah." "Déménagement" voices the pain of leaving Algeria for France and attests to racist violence and growing unemployment. Besides being a singer and musician, Salah Sadaoui was also the art director of the "scopitones Arabes et berbères," staging, in cafés and bars, his contemporary artists of North African descent in France.[30]

Listen to Salah Sadaoui—"Déménagement (El Djazair 1985)" (youtu.be/l0urqiOAsEg)

Although Rocé was invited by the museum to participate in the "Studio Sessions," the curators of the exhibition overlooked every artist from this compilation despite these musicians' essential role in anticolonial independence struggles or social movements in postcolonial France, as underlined in the compilation booklet. Instead of giving space to the postcolonial francophone music that emerged from the independence struggles and between the colony, the postcolony, and France, the museum chose once again to shed light on French pop music as embodied by the voices of white male poets/singer-songwriters. Indeed, the exhibition dedicates one panel of the space to the Serge Gainsbourg reinterpretation and detournement of the national anthem, "La Marseillaise," as the most subversive claim of all time. This song, produced in 1979 and featuring reggae-dub tunes, lends an ironic tone to the anthem and underlines a casual "mise à distance" to the nation embedded in it. Distorting the original version of "La Marseillaise," the song provoked a polemical public debate. The controversy quickly gained enormous visibility, reinvesting the singer with a certain notoreity.[31] The military and some conservatives had strong reactions against Serge Gainsbourg.[32] To some extent, Gainsbourg disturbs and critically addresses the representation of the nation with his interpretation of the anthem, although he did not question how the notion of the French nation is bound up with whiteness. In thus paying tribute to Gainsbourg as a symbol figure for the heritage of music migration, the museum reasserts a patronizing dynamic of using the white male artist to support the cause of the various Others.

Despite being only present during a temporary side event of the exhibition, *Par les damnés de la terre* intervenes into these representational choices apparent in the display. Rocé's compilation emphasizes the significant contribution of postcolonial francophone artists of color to the so-called *chanson Française* (a music genre). This music genre has influenced many francophone artists; in return, the genre itself has been influenced by the heritage of postcolonial music migration.

29 *Even if there are some white francophone activist allies of singers and musicians who are also featured in the compilation, such as Colette Magny, etc.* **30** *Rocé 2018 (note 27).* **31** *The album went platinum for several months.* **32** *On September 28, 1979, one of his concerts was almost cancelled due to pressure by veterans' associations.*

Par les damnés de la terre's sonic memories crystallize an era when anticolonial struggles in the global south generated solidarity. The title pays tribute to Frantz Fanon's thinking but also reappropriates its legacy in that the word "par" (by) empowers the form of a subjectivation in the title "the wretched of the earth." Rocé's memory work foregrounds the agency o f the former colonized subjects represented as fighters speaking out of their own conditions. "At the intersection between the anticolonial independence struggles, the workers struggles and the exile" as explained by Rocé, those sonic memories reveal that this history is not untold but simply not audible as it has been told. With this compilation, which is based on ten years of research, Rocé pays tribute to the "wretched of the earth" in a "poetry of emergency" by expressing the knowledge of struggles from 1969 to 1988. As he argues, the compilation aims to "(re)give voice to the new generations who are evolving in France with a lack of identification, oblivious of their parents' history in the political and cultural landscape in which they are growing up."[33]

Without doubt, this memory work can be considered as the creation of a living sonic archive. What the anthology shows is the *convergence* of struggles via listening to music practices of shared cultural memory. The gesture of this compilation enables the various memories of migration to resonate and echo with each other as if they were engaged in a collective discussion and were sharing experiences. In this constellation one song seems to respond to another sonically. What if this were to happen in the exhibition's space? As Rocé highlights, the quiet forgotten memories have already been speaking loudly to each other. So why can't they be heard in the exhibition? Following the composer Pauline Oliveros' concept of "deep listening," I would ask the curatorial team about this slight neglect of certain memories and historical narratives in the display: "Why can't sounds be audible or visible? Would the feedback from the ears to the eyes cause a fatal oscillation?"[34] "Deep listening" consists in raising awareness in our listening practice to the embodied social environment. Listening gives attention to the soundscape of a particular environment. Listening is thus understood as an active matter of perception.[35]

Listening as a Feminist Practice toward Postmigrant Futurities

Yet the motif of struggle put forward in both the exhibition and Rocé's compilation emphasizes a representation of these musical histories as being predominantly male. In both cases, women remain mostly absent, and if they are acknowledged at all, then predominantly white women are foregrounded. Whereas white supremacist modes of governance do

33 *Rocé 2018 (note 27).* **34** *Oliveiros, Pauline,* Deep Listening: A Composer's Sound Practice, *NewYork/Lincoln/Shanghai 2005, p. 18.* **35** *Oliveiros defines "deep listening" practice as a form of meditation, enabling one "to expand the perception of sounds, to include the whole space/time continuum of sound—encountering the vastness and complexities as much as possible." Oliveros 2005 (note 34), p. xxiii.*

not allow all of us to speak out equally, a feminist take would elaborate practices of listening as strategies of empowerment among communities. In various feminist practices, listening to each other's experiences and thus situating each other's knowledge is crucial—as a means of making visible how we can relate to each other as well as what makes us relate. Listening therefore aims for a reconsideration of our understanding of subject positions and subjectivation modes. How do we speak, make use of language? How can one receive the voice of the others beyond mechanisms of exclusion? Listening as a practice endeavors to deconstruct the very idea of the enlightened universal subject embedded in Whiteness at the core of Western modern society. Listening practices engaging in reconsidering forms of languages, expressions, and the sonic repertoire to listen to and break free from the dichotomy of self and other and to fight against the isolated subject.

Investigating the role of women in pro-immigration struggles in France and the invisibilities of women's struggles, the activist Kahina X stresses,in an article, how anticolonial claims found their expressions via protest songs in Algeria.[36] X explains that women were not only active and at the front line of the Algerian independence movement and later in the labor and civil rights movements. They have always been carrying the transpersonal memory of these struggles and especially passing on sonic memories (repertoire of sounds) in song. Singing as an art of struggling was thus used as a primary communication mode to voice oppositional claims against the colonial power in Algeria.[37] Despite the difficulty of evolving in a strictly male environment, some of these songs have been created as part of the migrant experience in France by some Algerian female artists such as Hanifa, Cherifa, or Noura (mentioned above). As the activist remembers from their personal experience growing up in a family of Algerian descent in France, the women of their mother's generation were the ones transmitting the transpersonal cultural memories of struggles in songs. Between the personal and the collective, music mediates as well as performs the past struggles into present resistance, through memory works such as lyrics, poems, and storytelling,[38] as well as through echoes of sounds and haptic vibrations.[39]

Such legacy of voicing, like singing as a form of empowerment, is not without echoes of the persuasive statement of the Black feminist poet-activist-thinker Audre Lorde—"your silence will not protect you."[40] In this sense, the practice of listening only works together with a politics of voicing (in circulation). It is not enough to listen, first. For most, the question is how to enable inclusive spaces for everyone to speak out, from their personal experiences with their situated embodied knowledge.[41] As the curator Lucia Farinati's

36 *The author claims that more than thousands of songs were created between 1954 and 1962 to raise voices against the colonial power.* X, Kahina, *"AVRIDH D'AVRIDH—ce qui est juste est juste," in* Boubeker and Hajjat 2008 *(note 3), p. 306.* **37** *The Algerian history of anticolonial struggle follows or interconnects with the singing traditions of Negro spirituals and gospel as a form of resistance and survival that African-American slaved performed in the plantation; see* Boubeker & Hajjat 2008 *(note 3), p. 306.* **38** Kuhn 2010 *(note 15).* **39** Campt, Tina M. Listening to Images, Durham/London 2017 **40** Lorde, Audre, Your Silence Will Not Protect You, London 2017. **41** Spivak, Gayatri, Can the Subaltern Speak, Basingstoke 1988.

"proposition#12 for feminist collective practices" highlights, resonance of voices as embodiment and relationality in the practice of communication is crucial to every collective feminist project.[42] Farinati suggests that this consists in "emphasizing organs such as the voice, the vocal cords, the ears that have constructed and reconstruct and inflect our language," as a way to "open us up to our relational co-becoming with non-humans and our environment."[43] Listening as feminist practices stresses how interconnectedly the senses function in our practice of remembrance. Listening to sonic memories embodied in storytelling, poetry, and songs makes it possible to retrace the history of colonization and to understand its aftermath in France today. It recalls affective experiences of migrant experiences fighting to the right to belong as citizens against the grain of nationalism and state racism. Making postcolonial struggle narratives audible within the exhibition space could stand as a *decolonizing action* providing sounds of resistance and disobedience that address a system of oppression, from the present process to the future.

Dedicated to the representation of the history of individuals who carry personal stories of migrations in France, the MNHI cannot avoid the memory works led by the artists as it constitutes the grid of the history of migrations. Between memory objects and public history tools, the memory works conducted by Rocé with his compilation and Nabil Djedouani with his digital archive attempt work similar to that of historians with archives. Both artistic practices act upon the determination to trace the past in order to preserve it and store it. Dedicated to the future generations, their work entails historical narratives, increasing the possibility of social cohesion for minorities toward the body of national historiography.

We can only hope for now that referring to artist practice as knowledge of research will add to material resources from this history and give cultural memory increasing significance in the future of social sciences and humanities, as well as in the curation of exhibitions at the National Museum.

42 *Farinati, Lucia, "proposition#12 for feminist collective practices," in Roe, Alex Martinis, ed.,* To Become Two: Propositions for Feminist Collective Practice, *Berlin 2018, pp. 225–231. Farinati's research work focuses on sound and listening in a collaborative process in exhibition and events making. Her work includes radio projects, site-specific interventions, performances, talks, and workshops that enhance collective listening as well as create an ongoing archive of recorded conversations and interviews (see http://www.soundthreshold.org/).* **43** *Farinati 2018 (note 42), p. 227.*