

OCHOA GAUTIER, ANA MARÍA. *Aurality: Listening and Knowledge in Nineteenth-Century Colombia*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2014. xiii + 266 pp.

As the author alerts us, the project that resulted in her book, *Aurality: Listening and Knowledge in Nineteenth-Century Colombia*, began with a different purpose—as a study of popular music in Colombia during the middle decades of the twentieth century. But as Ana María Ochoa Gautier started to examine the data, she tells us, she found that an earlier substrate of intellectual grounding required attention; moreover, her research into these matters coincided with the emergence of sound studies, treating sound as “a field of theorization” (207), and this field seemed to offer a fresh and rewarding perspective. As a consequence of these shifts in the agenda, *Aurality* is a book about speaking and listening, about communication involving the voice and the ear, as these sensory elements were understood, represented, and subjected to reform in Colombia by a remarkable group of thinkers, writers, cultural activists, soldiers, and statesmen during the second half of the nineteenth century.

As such, this book brings to life a series of debates centered on the role of language and its expressive forms in the context of a nation recently freed from colonial domination and seeking ways to mold its heterogeneous population into a society of citizens with a common national identity and consciousness. This topic is developed through the application of a rigorous analytical design aimed at teasing out “the politics of regimentation of the voice” (9) by attending to “contested site[s] of different acoustic practices” (4). Hence, it would appear the book’s author has sought to make contributions on two fronts: one, to acquaint the reader with a cast of protagonists carrying on the featured nineteenth-century debates; and two, to realize the promise of sound studies through systematic deployment of its guiding principles in this case study. Let’s take a look at how these tasks are performed in this valuable contribution to the scholarly library.

Regarding the nineteenth-century conversations, Ochoa does an excellent job of introducing us to her cast of characters, locating them in relevant intellectual and political contexts, and exposing us to the ideas developed in their published work, with ample selections of their own writing, in the author’s clear English translations. We begin this round of acquaintances with the renowned explorer and naturalist, Alexander von Humboldt, who traveled through the interior of Colombia at the dawn of the nineteenth century making observations of all that he encountered and documenting these in his diaries and publications. Humboldt enters this account as an early commentator on the disturbing vocalizations of the *bogas*, the pole-bearers who moved boats up the Magdalena River when this was an artery from the Caribbean coast to the nation’s highland capital in Bogotá. What Humboldt described as the “barks and howling” (32) of these “free people of color”

remained an irritant in the accounts of later travelers, and serves in Ochoa's treatment as emblematic of sonorities arising in a heterogeneous setting that challenge efforts to incorporate multiple voices into a shared acoustics of modern citizenship.

The Colombian thinkers surveyed in this book stand out for their engaged cultural politics. José María Vegara y Vegara was the author of an influential history of literature in Nueva Granada (the postcolonial region embracing modern-day Colombia, Ecuador, Panama, and Venezuela), who lamented the absence of a national epic and who argued for documenting the popular voice in its folkloric manifestations. Ezequiel Uricoechea conceived of the Andes as the biblical paradise and valued indigenous cultures to such an extent that he edited a series of grammars and vocabularies of Colombia's indigenous languages. Rufino José Cuervo was a philologist who saw etymology as a way of constraining the dispersive tendencies of the popular tongue; his colleague, Miguel Antonio Caro, saw grammar and eloquence as markers of humankind's ascent into a civilized state. This pair of conservative thinkers was offset by, and often at odds with, such contemporaries as Candelario Obeso, the first major Afro-Colombian writer, and the novelist (and ethnographer) Jorge Isaacs, author of *María*, an important early Latin American novel. Obeso composed poetry in the popular style of his Caribbean homeland and argued for the inclusion of Afro-Colombian Spanish in the canon of Colombian literary style; Isaacs argued for the value of African-origin and indigenous sensibilities against the purifying tendencies of the grammarians Caro and Cuervo.

Each of these figures is presented in a thoughtful and respectful tone. Given the preferences of our own times, it would be easy to cast Uricoechea, Obeso, and Isaacs as the open-minded good guys and Caro and Cuervo as elitist villains. But for my money, and to Ochoa's credit, Miguel Antonio Caro comes across as a particularly intriguing figure. In her account, Caro is dedicated to crafting cultivated styles of verbal production, yet he recognizes the priority and the fecundity of popular speech. At the center of his language philosophy is elocution, which he traces to the conjoining of grammatical and musical speech. Consider this proposition from an 1881 treatise by Caro: "Articulate speech is not song, but it is broken and modulated with accents, tones and rhythms that imitate song in order to express the sentiments that animate us" (176). There is much in the thinking of this scholar that anticipates modern-day ethnopoetics!

We turn now to Ochoa's second apparent goal, to fashion an interpretive paradigm capable of extracting fresh insights from her materials. She deploys a scheme based in sound studies but aggregating other components in an effort to locate in the production, reception, and processing of sound a set of practices active in defining citizenship and the nation. A positive note here is the way she includes

in this mix of ideas a good deal of interesting work by scholars based in Latin America, work that deserves wider attention in the English-language world. We enjoy a sampling of the actual Colombian voicings at the base of her inquiry—I would have liked to see more—and, as noted, an immersion in the intellectual programs of Colombia’s nineteenth-century thinkers. These materials are filtered through an elaborate interpretive apparatus that is strictly enforced, producing a dense yet intriguing read, and engaging our interest in the ways language, especially in forms of popular speech and song, was theorized during a formative period of nation-building in Colombia.

A number of worthwhile themes surface in the pages of this book. By focusing on the array of voices in postcolonial Colombia and the poetics and politics arising to refine and contain them, this study succeeds in foregrounding the interplay of orality, aurality, and literacy in the shaping of the nation. Perhaps most salient among the book’s overarching themes is the thread identifying the voice as a necessary but troublesome phenomenon, demanding, but never quite submitting to, mitigation and immunization. In an epilogue titled “The Oral in the Aural,” the author formulates this theme, arguing that sound’s “dispersed materiality and ontological ambivalence” lend it “the potential to highlight the limits of the effects of the technologies of power at the very moment they are enacted” (209).

JOHN HOLMES MCDOWELL  
*Indiana University*

FERNÁNDEZ, ENRIQUE. *Anxieties of Interiority and Dissection in Early Modern Spain*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2015. x + 273 pp.

La emergencia de ciertos discursos en la alta modernidad europea se da solidariamente con el profundo cambio que sufren las relaciones entre sujeto y objeto durante dicho período. *Anxieties of Interiority and Dissection in Early Modern Spain* analiza el impacto de uno de esos discursos, el científico-médico, a través de cinco autores peninsulares que abarcan y sintetizan la época: Fray Luis de Granada, Miguel de Cervantes, Francisco de Quevedo, María de Zayas y Baltasar Gracián. En sus escritos se analiza la práctica de lo que el autor del estudio monográfico, Enrique Fernández, denomina “narraciones disectivas”; esto es, textos que proponen la figura de un Otro para después diseccionarlo dentro de los códigos del discurso anatómico.

El monográfico reseñado supone una gran aportación a los estudios sobre la subjetividad de los siglos XVI y XVII, especialmente porque ilustra un giro hacia la interioridad que viene acompañado de la necesidad de exponerla. En este sentido,