“Notes and Letters”: Music of the City in Flight / Trans-Migratory Poetry

Antonio Monte Casablanca / Free University of Berlin

Translated by Crystal Neill, with Amanda Minks and Lila Ellen Gray

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Abstract

In this essay I draw from memory studies and Latin American cultural studies to reflect on *Notas y Letras* (Notes and Letters), a collaboration by the Nicaraguan band Nemi Pipali and the poet Adolfo Beteta. I analyze these artistic expressions, music and poetry, at their place of convergence—the city of Managua—making audible some of the mechanisms that combine symbolic universes in Nicaraguan culture. This transdisciplinary reading allows me to propose that 1) music becomes a social marker of performative memory, transmitted by sounds present in hybrid Latin American cities, and 2) the migrant subject is displaced and divided between the center and the periphery.

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Antonio Monte Casablanca was born in Argentina and raised between Costa Rica and Nicaragua, due to a combination of dictatorships, hyperinflation, and natural disasters. He is currently a DAAD scholarship holder (German Academic Exchange Service) and PhD candidate in history at the Free University of Berlin. He holds a master’s degree in Cultural Studies from the Universidad Centroamericana (UCA) in Managua, Nicaragua. He was employed as a professor and researcher at the Institute of Nicaraguan and Central American History at the UCA from 2016 to 2019. His research interests include the history of tourism in Nicaragua during the regime of the Somoza family (1936-1979), elites and authoritarianism, and musical as well as

aural scenes in Managua. He is the author of the book *Paisaje/Sujeto/Nación: Turismo e inversión en Nicaragua (1872-1940)*, published in 2017 by the Institute of Nicaraguan and Central American History and the Universidad Centroamericana. His most recent publications are “Autoritarismo, violencia y élites en Nicaragua. Reflexiones sobre la crisis (2018-2019),” co-authored with Juan Pablo Gómez and published by *Anuario de Estudios Centroamericanos* vol. 46 (2020), and a forthcoming chapter entitled “Historia global, turismo y Centroamérica: Espacios y culturas de viaje,” which is part of CLACSO’s compilation *América Latina y la Historia Global: Repensar el mundo* (2020), edited by Carlos Riojas and Stefan Rinke.

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Manuscript Editors’ Introduction—Amanda Minks and Lila Ellen Gray

Antonio Monte’s evocative essay “‘Notes and Letters’: Music of the City in Flight / Trans-Migratory Poetry” was the product of deep thinking through acts of listening. At first glance, this might seem like something we all do in cultural music studies, but it takes on more intensity in this piece, written from a location on the periphery of global scholarly networks. This imaginative work captures the wonder of performance and the creativity of artists who interpret their heterogenous experiences of a Latin American city through performance, sound, word, and voice.

Monte’s concept of “trans-migration” evokes a multiplicity of migrations, an ongoing in-betweenness, and an overlap of fragmented geographies and subjectivities. As he notes in his biography, Monte’s own trans-migratory routes from Argentina to Costa Rica and Nicaragua were shaped by a combination of factors—dictatorships, hyperinflation, and natural disasters. A longtime music aficionado, Monte wrote the essay as a side project in 2016 while finishing his master’s thesis in the inaugural cohort of a Cultural Studies program at the Universidad Centroamericana in Managua, Nicaragua. His studies were not focused on music, but he made his own connections between the cultural studies texts he was reading and his experiences listening to music and the city.

Nicaragua is well known as a haven for the arts, especially in the creative work of poets, musicians, and painters who reimagined national culture through revolutionary political processes from the 1960s through the 1980s. The promise of an egalitarian society was not entirely fulfilled, but it shaped subsequent generations who fused arts and politics in more subtle ways. When the band Nemi Pipali was founded in 2011, directed by then-sixteen-year-old Bruno

Cortina, Managua hosted a diverse music scene supported by independent artists, producers, and media makers. As Monte's essay makes clear, the vibrant public arts culture of Managua has continually coexisted with extremely unequal social structures. Whereas the 1979 Sandinista Revolution emerged from a coalition of social forces against a five-decade dictatorship, recent political movements have been more fragmented and often subject to co-optation. In April 2018, student protests against changes to the social security system amplified broader tensions. Over 300 citizens, including many youth, were killed in the months of unrest that followed.¹ This situation brought most public musical performances to a halt.

Monte's analysis was stimulated by a specific context of listening and performance, which he put into dialogue with a particular set of theoretical texts. The essay touches on ideas from a wide range of authors as a means of examining the multifaceted prism of this musical/poetic context. Several of the key works cited in Spanish have been published in English translation (Antonio Cornejo Polar's book *Writing in the Air*, Nestor García Canclini's *Hybrid Cultures*, and Javier Sanjinés' *Embers of the Past*). Readers seeking more engagement with specific ideas can trace them to their sources. We also encourage readers to access associated media online as a counterpoint to the analysis. Nemi Pipali's 2016 album *Crece* can be streamed on YouTube and Soundcloud. Their collaboration with the independent film company Cierta Güis Productions resulted in the short musical film *Enano Cabezón*.² A special focus of Monte's analysis is Nemi Pipali's collaboration with the poet Adolfo Beteta, who grew up largely in Worcester, Massachusetts, and writes his poetry in English. Their layered synergy of sounds, voices, affect, and memory comes through in a performance captured and archived on YouTube in 2014.³

Monte's essay prompts further exploration of broader relations among memory, affect, voice, and the city. Among other questions, how do different cities bring up different residues or echoes of coloniality, especially in the emotions and memories that haunt affect in musical performance and listening? How does our understanding of the relations between centers and peripheries shift when we consider trans-migratory routes between them? How are historic center and periphery relations re-shaped by processes of decay (or revival) in imperialist and postcolonial cities? How might scholars employ critical perspectives from multiple locations to attend to the emotional and embodied power of musical and sonic experience without romanticizing their affects? How might we approach the richness of vocality and the force of the poetic, the sonic, and the musical through heightened attention to the "fuzzy boundary zone" (Ochoa 2014, 211) between the aural and the lettered, between music and language, and between inchoate sensation and that which is explicitly named? Readers engaged in these kinds of inquiries may follow their own resonant traces from this work to other locations, texts, and sonorities.

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About the Translation

This translation project was a gradual, collaborative, dialogic process with goals that shifted over time. Crystal Neill carried out the bulk of translation in the first draft through a research assistantship with Amanda Minks in the Honors College at the University of Oklahoma. The objective at that time was to use the English translation for teaching purposes (with Antonio Monte's permission) and to make it available to Monte as a potential future publication in English. After the *Ethnomusicology Translations* series came to our attention, Lila Ellen Gray joined the translation/editorial team with a fresh perspective on the poetics of translation, as well as experience with related theoretical work and a resonant ethnographic site—*fado* in Lisbon, Portugal. Antonio Monte provided feedback on the English translation at multiple stages of the project, and Richard Wolf helped to improve the translation. The biggest challenges in the translation were to convey the theoretical concepts in an accessible way and to capture the poetics of Monte's representation of sound in his writing. We took liberties in the translation (with Monte's review and approval) and added contextual information to make the work more accessible to a broad range of readers. Some terminology may be unfamiliar to general readers in ethnomusicology, especially passages drawing on Latin American literary/cultural studies and those drawing on psychoanalytic theory. The bibliography may lead readers to further exploration of the concepts and authors that Monte uses in his work.

“Notes and Letters”: Music of the City in Flight / Trans-Migratory Poetry⁴

...that is where the unnameable truth of emotion lies; there too, is the void that he sometimes points to, in a less natural or substantial fashion, and where the rhythm of a music or the gestures of a dance are being woven.

Julia Kristeva⁵

Beneath blankets of palm slept giant drums, mothers of drums, whose red-painted feet appeared to be human. The rains obeyed the conjurings of the wise men, and in the celebrations of circumcision, when the adolescents danced with their thighs lacquered in blood, they beat sonorous slabs, producing a music like great tamed waterfalls.

Alejo Carpentier⁶

Music and poetry are the greatest gifts of the universe because they reveal to us the sublime. While this is a universal phenomenon, the quotations that open this essay suggest that the experience of the sublime also draws on and projects the specificity of music’s cultural context. At the same time, these passages express the ability of a melody to weave together the unnameable truth of emotion and the “marvelous real” (Carpentier 1973, 6) of ritual.⁷ Kristeva analyzes the work of the French writer Louis-Ferdinand Céline to show that the secret way to read the intimate depths of the truth lies in the melody of words. Céline’s devotion to rhythm and melody emerged exactly when the symbolic universe of language was falling to pieces, in the context of a dynamic reality propelled by the machinery of the World Wars (Kristeva 2010, 190). The Cuban writer and musicologist Alejo Carpentier studied music as an element of what he called *lo real maravilloso americano* (the American marvelous real)—sparked by his experiences of Caribbean cultural contexts. In developing the idea of “the marvelous real,” Carpentier adapted and transformed the concept of “magical realism”—initially coined by the German writer Franz Roh to describe post-Expressionist painting that was moving away from abstraction (Zamora and Faris 2000, 15). As Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy Faris have written, Carpentier found distinctive realities and representations in Latin America and the Caribbean, where:

the fantastic is not to be discovered by subverting or transcending reality with abstract forms and manufactured combinations of images. Rather, the fantastic inheres in the natural and human realities of time and place, where improbable juxtapositions and marvelous mixtures exist by virtue of Latin America’s varied history, geography, demography, and politics—not by manifesto. (Zamora and Faris 1995, 75)

Bringing Carpentier’s ideas into dialogue with Kristeva’s foregrounds the intimate relations among music, language, emotion, and transcendent ritual. These relations prompt us to listen

with different ears to the multiple meanings of musical and poetic performances in Latin America.

The meanings of musical/poetic relations in contemporary Latin American contexts can simultaneously entail mystical transcendence, rupture, and displacement. In this essay I analyze the context in which the Nicaraguan band Nemi Pipali and the poet Adolfo Beteta succeeded in fusing their musical and poetic arts, interweaving the sonic and the lettered. In their arts, we find an aural and written archive that permits us to analyze three fundamental axes of culture in the city of Managua, Nicaragua: a) the modernity experienced in this urban space, b) the social memory constructed in this space and its forms of projection in music and poetry, and c) the negotiation of memory and culture across multiple migrations between the center and the periphery.

Nemi Pipali composed their music in a Spanish-speaking context at the outskirts of Managua; Beteta wrote his poetry in English while moving between New England and Managua. They did not know each other before collaborating in the event *Notas y Letras* (Notes and Letters), a performance which took place twice in the city of Managua, in April and November of 2014. In spite of the distance between their sites and languages of creation, the music and poetry combined symmetrically, a phenomenon of intersection that raises several questions: Why are Beteta's poems in English perfectly adapted to Nemi Pipali's compositions that were conceptualized in Spanish? How are the tales and images of New England connected to music composed in Managua? What mechanisms of cultural transmission permit this combination?

These questions resonate with Jorge Luis Borges's observation that music is "the strangest world of art." Borges felt constantly stalked by images and words; similarly, he thought that the "musician feels that the strange world of sounds is always searching for him, that there are melodies and dissonances that search for him" (2001, 285).⁸ Latin American cultural studies and memory studies permit us to approach this "strange" world and read this cultural phenomenon from two places of enunciation, Managua and New England. I use concepts of hybridity, heterogeneity, and aurality from Latin American cultural studies to analyze the experiences of Nemi Pipali and Beteta (García Canclini 1990, Cornejo Polar 2013, Sanjinés 2009, Ochoa Gautier 2014). Working with these concepts alongside theorizations of collective memory in relation to music, lyrics, sound, and performance (Halbwachs 2011, Taylor 2007) permits us to contextualize how the city of Managua shapes the creation of certain sounds and metaphors and articulates the past with the present, expressing the voices of our reality. Music and poetry enable us to move closer to the sublime, to the truth of an emotion and the "marvelous real."

ILLUSTRATION 1: Promotional poster for the 2014 event Notes and Letters. Painting by William Grigsby Vergara.

1. Notas y Letras: The Meeting of Music and Poetry

The questions that structure this essay emerged from the co-performance of Nemi Pipali and Adolfo Beteta during the event *Notas y Letras* in November 2014. The band Nemi Pipali was founded in Managua in 2011 by the brothers Bruno and Michael Cortina. Bruno Cortina—the younger brother—was the director, composer, guitarist and vocalist; Michael Cortina played drumset; and Evenor González played electric bass with the band at the time of this study. When I first heard Nemi Pipali's "Bescherelle" a few months before the *Notas y Letras* event, the music seemed very unusual to me. The sound of "Bescherelle," an instrumental piece without vocals, was difficult for me to grasp. At the beginning, the guitarist Bruno Cortina floods the atmosphere with bubbles coming up from an ocean of howls, bursting erratically. The guitar submerges us in sounds that wander between the most aggressive tempests and flat, serene breezes. As Bruno strums, strikes, and slides along the strings, the guitar explores a labyrinth of expressions that float randomly in shadowy darkness. The sounds become diluted and distorted, both violent and calm. Slowly, the percussion and electric bass accompany the dissonant harmonies without giving them a rigid structure; rather, the metallic spirals from the cymbals and the darkness of the bass submerge us in an asphyxiating atmosphere that strangles the wailing of the instruments. The music keeps igniting but never accelerates, and then dissipates in the middle of many possible paths. Without warning, the experience of "Bescherelle" ends.

I relived this experience weeks after listening to this music for the first time. One night, I found myself stuck in traffic on the highway outside Managua. It was drizzling in the city. I lost focus while watching the traffic lights reflected in the rain flowing over the windshield wipers. I saw the lights of the city disfigured in the condensed sweat on the windows of a bus. And I felt the thuds of speed bumps repeating intermittently. It was in the middle of these fluctuations that I began to hear the dissonances of "Bescherelle" in my memory. Then, I realized that just as the music continues to ignite without accelerating, only to dissipate in the middle of many possible hopes, so too does the city of Managua.

Months later, when I began to study the music of the band, I realized that the song communicates the experience of the peripheral city from a neighborhood on its periphery.⁹ We can hear the displacement of the two main members of the band, Michael and Bruno Cortina, from the heights of Cedro Galán (a suburb along the old highway to León) to the city of Managua, full of the complexities that cause anguish to life in this city. Their music transforms rhythm and sound in a way that shows us the layering of diverse, collapsed temporalities in Managua. It reminded me of the transient nature of Managua: the majority of people no longer live there, but enter and leave from its peripheries. Managua is a disrupted city that lives "in flight" from itself, like the guitar in "Bescherelle" (Rocha 2015, 2019). This city emits its sounds from an ocean of howls, wails, and suffocated complaints, blocking the flight of its inhabitants, struggling to breathe in the choked traffic. The music evokes the grumbles of the passersby and expresses the anguish of unfixable disorder. We feel the desperation in the waves of trash inundating the streets. The sounds of the city denounce its vices and make manifest the suffering from its injustices.

In November, after several months of studying this music, I found it surprising that “Bescherelle” and its intimate relationship with the peripheries of Managua could be performed beneath the spoken word poem “A Breather” by Adolfo Beteta. Both were presented in *Notas y Letras* as a single piece, transcending temporalities, languages, and borders. This joining of “Bescherelle” and “A Breather” captures the symbiosis between the ocean of howls in Managua and the ordeals of the “Average Joes” across borders.¹⁰ The English poem is a soliloquy that uses various elements of U.S. popular culture to express an inscrutable loneliness. The music has barely started when Beteta says, “At last the worst is over.” The music unites the prayers and laments of Beteta, who slowly bares his fears, sufferings, and misfortunes in the poem. A need to breathe runs through the verses of “A Breather” and gives us in its climax a liberating wish when Beteta exclaims, “I want to breathe knowing that my breath is the best kept secret in the universe.” The recitation of the poem together with Nemi Pipali’s music reaches its culminating point when Beteta’s performance settles over the musicians and begins to contort their bodies. The word interrupts Bruno’s body, the verses disfigure his face and stiffen his posture. This intensity obliges Bruno to shrug his shoulders, dragging an internal procession that tenses his hands and buckles his energy. This is not because the musical complexity requires it (he is in control of his guitar the entire time), but because Beteta’s intensity beats Bruno’s chest and forces the expression of his dislocated gaze. Then Bruno raises his gaze and focuses all his energy on the poet, refracting the intensity of his words, following them in the descending harmonies that guide the poem to its finish. Beteta, for his part, ends pronouncing, “The lips of wisdom are closed to deaf ears.”

The poem pounds us with the same intensity that “Bescherelle” does, with intermingled grace and fury. In the suffocating atmosphere, the music struggles to breathe just as much as the poet in his self-immolation. The intransigence of Nemi Pipali is a deafness that pushes against the words of the poet. Although the poem is semantically attached to U.S. culture, the combined music and poetry unite the dissonance of Managua with the symbols invoked in English by Beteta. This artistic expression permits us to investigate the ways in which memory and culture open communicative channels between the musicians and the poet, fostering the marvelous real in Managua.

ILLUSTRATION 2: The poet Adolfo Beteta rehearsing in the house of the Cortina brothers for the event Notes and Letters. That day he discovered the source of the song title “Bescherelle” when he found the French conjugation book lying in the living room. (Photograph by Luise Siu.)

2. Nemi Pipali: Music of the City in Flight

Two fundamental concepts in Latin American cultural studies are “hybridity” and “heterogeneity,” from Néstor García Canclini and Antonio Cornejo Polar, respectively. On one hand, the band members of Nemi Pipali exemplify the “hybrid culture” that García Canclini identifies as the product of the “multitemporal heterogeneity” packed into Latin American modernity (1990, 72). These cultures “are currently the result of the sedimentation, juxtaposition, and crisscrossing of indigenous traditions, colonial Catholic Hispanism, and modern political, educational, and communicative actions.” García Canclini locates Latin American hybridity in the “houses of the bourgeoisie and middle classes with a higher educational level,” where “multilingual libraries and indigenous handicrafts, cable television, parabolic antennas, and colonial furniture coexist” (ibid., 71). On the other hand, Cornejo Polar argues that Latin American heterogeneity is “non-dialectic;” in other words, he argues that the collapse of cultures and temporalities does not produce a synthesis, but rather multiplies the times and spaces of

enunciation of the subject (1996, 843). In this sense, the Latin American subject is heterogeneous as a result of being displaced and located in different spaces and times.

In line with García Canclini and Cornejo Polar, the band Nemi Pipali metabolizes the indigenous, the colonial, and the displacements of modern Managua, multiplying its places and times of enunciation. The name Nemi Pipali is a Náhuatl proverb that means “to live the present.” The band members juxtapose this proverb with their self-identification as a “Nicaraguan powerhouse trio,” whose musical genre they describe as “crossed.” We also see the inherent hybridity in the environment where the Cortina brothers grew up (Michael Cortina was age 26 at the time of this study in 2016; Bruno was 21). The Cortina brothers are the sons of a Cuban father and a Nicaraguan mother. Their father is one of the best saxophonists in the country, and their mother is a homeopathic doctor and a jazz singer. Both brothers grew up in a musical and intercultural environment. They attended various bilingual high schools in Managua and speak both Spanish and English very well. When they speak of their childhood, they consider the background music of their familial environment to be a foundation: Miles Davis, Jimmy Hendrix, Frank Zappa, Carlos Santana, and others.

ILLUSTRATION 3: The band Nemi Pipali’s space for rehearsal and composition in the Cortina brothers’ house. (Photograph by Juan Monte.)

On the outskirts of Managua in Cedro Galán, the home of the Cortina brothers is surrounded by a thick layer of trees. Inside the house, they practice their music in an open room designed to house their instruments (see Illustration 3). In the room, we find paintings by Cuban, Nicaraguan, North American, and European artists. Under the paintings, we observe various types of acoustic and electric guitars, drum sets, bongos, and maracas. We can also find an electric bass, synthesizers, and small electric keyboards. All these instruments rest in the room while the Cortina brothers go from one instrument to the next as they are imagining the sound they wish to produce.

The music the Cortina brothers produced in this space is, I argue, revealing of how culture intercedes in the social frameworks of memory in Managua and how memory is framed in musical genres transported performatively through the corporealization of experience in the city. In the next two sections I analyze two songs by Nemi Pipali in order to show how the musicians channel this music not from a lettered perspective, but from the auditory perspective emanating from the city itself, which in turn imprints its traces on the bodies of the musicians. In harmony with the work of Ana María Ochoa, the music of Nemi Pipali demonstrates that the “dispersal of the aural... signifies... not a postmodern fragmentation but rather a rearticulation of the plurality characteristic of decentering a long history of a modernity plagued by silencing, inequalities and disencounters” (Ochoa Gautier 2006, 806).

ILLUSTRATION 4: Nemi Pipali in performance, including band members Evenor González, Bruno Cortina, and Michael Cortina. (Photograph by Luise Siu.)

2.1 *Maldito Voltaje (Damned Voltage)*

¡Algo aquí anda mal!

¡Algo aquí no está bien!

[Something is going wrong here!]

[Something here isn't right!]

Bruno yells these phrases in an inflamed voice at the beginning of the song titled “Maldito Voltaje” (Damned Voltage).¹¹ Michael glides over the cymbals of the drum set, introducing a jazz foundation that is detonated by Bruno’s explosive discharges on the guitar. This is what makes the song. It spins us up and down without warning; it magnetically attracts and repels us. Sometimes we hear an avalanche; other times we hear the dissolution of faltering roars. We never know what is going to happen next. The Cortina brothers subject us to electroshock therapy that disrupts our senses, like a sudden “jolt” from an electrical outlet.

This is the experience that Bruno aims to project in the song. He says that its inspiration emerged with a sudden jolt (electroshock) that he suffered upon touching a fan (a common experience in a place with irregular electricity, like Managua). That hopelessness and instantaneous dislocation merge in the energetic moments of “Maldito Voltaje.” The music of Nemi Pipali takes the everyday insignificance of the event and converts something ordinary into something memorable. The phrases that jump between the musical outbursts jolt us as well, since they prompt us to ask ourselves how many times we think the same of the little things that wound us, obliging us to tell ourselves that “something is going wrong here,” “something here is not right.”

Integrating musical styles and genres, the Cortina brothers express the intimacy of a quotidian moment in Nicaragua. Their music embarks from a deconstruction of jazz and rock. They piece together these styles and genres to project the sound of a unique electroshock. Jazz and rock influence the Cortina brothers as part of a musical genealogy stemming from the blues and defining the group’s musical corpus. Embedded in this aural genealogical route, the brothers fuse together their music as a conceptual framework for their own interpretation of the sounds that constitute life in Managua. For the Cortina brothers, music is not an element about which they think, but rather a filter through which they think. In other words, the musical influences deconstructed in “Maldito Voltaje” build a social framework of memory, whose projection expresses the struggle of urban daily life. Music filters the experience of reality and projects it by way of a symbolic universe constructed by sounds that are absent from the present. The brothers do not think about these sounds, but rather think *with* these sounds—sounds which fortify their collective ties. Music supplies the rhythm, harmony, and melody to assimilate and project the articulation of past-present. These elements make up the sonic texture of their stories, the connection with their past, and the melodic thread of their memories.

We are not so different from the musicians of Nemi Pipali. Our memory resorts to similar mechanisms to understand a melody. Notes ascending and descending in a melody’s scales do not have meaning without rupture and/or continuity. We hear each note that invades space and time, bending it via a wave to reach our ears. The note leaves an imprint that remains on our body. But that note only has meaning if we immediately remember the previous sound, and, in

some cases, if we can intuit the next sound. One A-minor is the same as any other A-minor; it only becomes something special when we place it on an imaginary line where notes are suspended in the atmosphere, while somehow managing to stay with us for a moment. The notes that sound and are lost in the air are linked by the traces of sound in a body. In the same way that a star finds its mythological figure upon being united by an imaginary line with other stars to form a constellation, notes in a scale find their melody by way of imaginary lines that vibrate inside us.

Whereas Borges thought of music in terms of words, Maurice Halbwachs used lyrics and images to try to decipher the collective memory of musicians. Halbwachs argued that sounds are “noises in the same category that are not grouped around a typical auditory representation: when I want to know noises, I think of objects or of beings that, to my knowledge, produce them... Sound makes us think of an object through the sound; but the same object would rarely evoke the sound by itself” (2011, 223). According to Halbwachs, the memory of sound is tied to the image of the object that produces it or the word that delimits it. For example, the image of children playing frames the memory of the sounds of their laughter and shouts. Nevertheless, Halbwachs overlooks other meanings of these sounds. In the case of the musician, as we will see later, his life is surrounded by sounds to which he cannot attach an image or object. His frameworks of memory are concentrated in a sonic texture and in modes of listening or “aurality” (Ochoa Gautier 2014, 211-12). In the case of my study, I suggest there are emotional essences in sounds that imprint mnemonic tracks on the subject, even when they are not attached to images.

Ochoa notes that the separation of the acoustic or sonic from the lettered is an articulated phenomenon of modernity. Certainly, this separation is made evident in memory studies. Paul Ricoeur, in line with Halbwachs, emphasizes the peculiarity of the act of recalling an image. Ricoeur traces the relationship between memory and imagination in the act of “bringing the past to the present” by means of images that we successfully remember (2004, 22-23). According to Ricoeur, the word “memory” derives from a Greek root. Plato used the word *mneme* to explain how the “image” and the “imagination” are fundamental to “represent in the present an absent thing” (ibid., 23-24). This European genealogy denotes the supremacy of language and the written word in the sciences of Western civilization.

This genealogy of European thought also gave primacy to word and image in conceptualizing the modernity of the city. Halbwachs’ need to frame sounds according to the object that produces them comes from this genealogy. Along these lines, Martin Jay argues that the modern city produced the “empire of the visual,” whose dominion dictated the primacy of “ocularcentrism” (2003, 221). Contrary to these modes of privileging the visual, Ochoa suggests that aurality reveals orientations for listening to sound that frame and permeate Latin American cultural production. Furthermore, she argues, “the interrelated history of Western musics and language/orality share a fuzzy boundary zone,” which makes difficult a complete separation between music and language (Ochoa Gautier 2014, 211).

The song “Maldito Voltaje” gives us clues about how the feeling of an electric shock, which lacks an immediate image, can activate memories framed in musical genres like jazz and

rock—in other words, another “fuzzy boundary zone” within which aurality and memory are interwoven. Far from recalling an image, the song brings to the present a viscosity that vibrates in the body of the musician, even in the absence of the sensation of an electric shock. When I asked Bruno how he managed to capture the sound of a poem, he answered, “I don’t know why there are notes that sound sad and others that sound happy. I don’t begin by reading the poem; first, I ask the poet what feeling he would like to express, so that I can best capture what one reads.”¹² Note that Bruno needs to identify a feeling before reading the poem. He prefers to witness the performative emotionality of the poet, so he invokes “sad or happy” sounds according to how he understands the sounds of the feelings, rather than the sounds of the words. Here we note a break from Halbwachs’ conception. Bruno does not seem to be interested in relating sounds to images. The feeling of a sound interests him more; he is looking for that internal vibration, that electric shock that he wants to convey in the present.

For his part, Michael is involved with the music from the perspective of percussion. Faced with the same question of how he captured the sound of the poem, Michael suggests that “there is a velocity and rhythm. Depending on how the poet reads, he places the emphasis, and I am left to support what Bruno plays.” Neither of the brothers cites images to convey poetry or music. In our conversation, I suddenly see their sense of frustration in not being able to logically condense something that, at the start, seems so simple. In that moment Bruno and Michael both pick up their instruments, giving meaning to their words through an exercise in sound. With sounds as allies, they more powerfully explain their ideas.

The Cortina brothers appear to suggest that their reminiscence of the past, for musical purposes, begins with the search for an internal vibration missing from the present. In an interview, Bruno explains in his own words: “Sometimes I feel that I hear more than I see.” As for my part, I suspect that Bruno hears what we cannot see. Specifically, Bruno explains to me that the city has a “tessitura.”

Tessitura is a musical concept that refers to the range of notes in the register of an instrument or a human voice, which we can measure in octaves. Bruno suggested to me that he hears these ranges of sound in his journeys through Managua. He feels how the deep sounds travel “more stuck to the ground” while the high sounds “float in the air.” The ranges that weave the city’s tessitura are tapped by the feelings that their sounds project. Bruno perceives feelings in the sounds that surround him, accounting for what is witnessed and lived, such as an electric shock or a trip between his suburban home and the many centers of Managua. His memories of the city are socially framed by this auditory perception of reality, perhaps amplified by the myopia in one of his eyes and the stigmatism in the other. Bruno manages to hear the hidden presences in our daily life and perceive the sounds of the city that imprint tracks in his memory. The city murmurs, sings, whispers, grinds, and yells in its interior. For Bruno, that which is not said by the signs transforms the perception of the city into an experience of an aural borderline.

ILLUSTRATION 5: Bruno Cortina, guitar and vocals. (Photograph by Luise Siu.)

Michael Pollak develops the idea of memory in border situations. For Pollak, social frameworks of memory are composed of “an imposition, a specific form of domination or symbolic violence” (2006, 13-15). He suggests that the weight of the social can arrive at a “not said” on the part of the individual who remembers in order to affirm a social convention, regarding the fact of a collectively lived past. The supremacy of the visual in a city can be part of the symbolic violence which modernity exercises over the auditory perception of the city that Bruno recalls—or, following Ochoa, the hierarchy that the lettered exercises over the aural in the Latin American context.

Pollak’s analysis of border situations and memory is useful as a means of perceiving that individual memories flourish among social frameworks of memory. These frameworks can change with time when, for example, a person discusses their experience with others who experienced the same border situation. The dynamic dialogue of memories takes into account the centrality of oral communication that socially articulates the relations between past and present. However, in the city, visual signs tend to exercise dominion over the framing of memories. Musicians like Bruno and Michael live the contradiction of this dilemma, in which the urban tessitura exists in dynamic conflict with the empire of ocularcentrism. Music, like orality,

escapes the visual empire of the urban topography, built to be read and followed through the scopic regime. The musician lives an auditory experience of the city at its borders. Thus, orality and aurality form part of the musical framework of memory.

Pollak recognizes that border situations put in crisis what before passed for normal. We can intuit that if the musician lives in a constant border situation he can achieve what Bruno expresses in the song “Maldito Voltaje.” Bruno suggests that the feeling of an electric jolt can be expressed through sounds that take on other social frameworks of memory, like musical genres. Most people would not hear the unbearable feeling of the surge of electric energy passing through their bodies. For Bruno an electric jolt brings a deafening feeling, and he calls our attention to it so we can also hear it. Bruno expresses the noise of this incident through the projection of sound that vibrates inside him, now amplified in the heavy distortion of his electric guitar. His projection of the vibration of feeling from his past can be interpreted by another musician, like his brother Michael, who accompanies and improvises around this feeling. The shared structure of musical transmission of the past viscerally vibrates in their bodies. The electric jolt was ephemeral, but the traces of vibration linger and transcend their bodies in a dynamic dialogue within the aural social frameworks of memory.

In the first section, I argued for a social framework of auditory memory that escapes the articulation of sound-image-word, but that includes the dimension of aurality in the city. At points of contact and of flight, auditory memory captures the past and present, and dynamically dialogues with more dominant visual signs. In the next section, I reflect about the forms of conciliation and friction between the aural and the visual. In the Latin American case, this phenomenon is intimately related to the permeability of coloniality in our historic temporalities, collapsed in the present. I use another song by *Nemi Pipali* to interpret the articulation between memory and culture in the music of the band.

ILLUSTRATION 6: Michael Cortina, percussion. (Photograph by Luise Siu.)

2.2 Enano Cabezón

Enano Cabezón
¿dónde te fuiste hoy?

[*Enano Cabezón*]
[where did you go today?]

Michael describes the song “Enano Cabezón” as a “kind of tribute to what already exists in the streets of Nicaragua, more or less...” In this song, Nemi Pipali takes an element of Nicaraguan colonial culture and national patrimony—the dance of the *gigantona*—and brings it to the contemporary stage.¹³ The traditional dance of the *gigantona*, especially associated with the city of León, is made up of two giant puppets: the indigenous *enano cabezón* (a male with a large head, which indicates his intelligence and wit) accompanied by the Spanish *gigantona* (a tall, light-skinned woman who is an object of jest).¹⁴ The puppets walk and dance together through the streets while drum troupes attract the attention of people nearby to listen to folkloric *coplas*, rhymed couplets. The improvised verses may target a person in the crowd, or they may become a *¡bomba!* directed at a public official, challenging authority beneath the guise of comic performance. In recent years, *gigantonas* and *enanos cabezones* have wandered through Managua

on the shoulders of young men using the dance to earn a few dollars from tourists, who admire them while having a drink in the city bars. Rather than serving as the traditional manifestation of folk coplas and as public critiques of political life (as in the past), the performances of the gigantona and enano cabezón are now deployed as strategies for urban survival.

In the vocals of Nemi Pipali's song, Bruno asks Enano Cabezón, "where did you go today?" Enano walks the streets without memory of his steps, but the streets' heat and indifference beat him down. This sense of walking aimlessly is present in the song. The drums emerge surreptitiously, just as the young performers sneak through the streets of Managua. Michael pays tribute to the rhythm of the gigantona with his percussion arrangements. The song begins by replicating the traditional troupe's rhythmic accompaniment to the gigantona's dance. Then Michael begins fusing cumbia, jazz, and punk, superimposing various layers of sound and rhythm over the traditional rhythmic foundation. According to Michael, the song mixes "two or more influences, but the most notable is the rudimentary part of the pattern and its musical application. Another is the direct influence of the gigantonas and their rhythmic section. And the attempt to emulate, assimilate, and interpret those rhythms of the street [into our music]."

Bruno joins this rhythmic foundation, roughly ripping the guitar strings. He grinds the metal, simulating an accelerating handsaw that runs without stopping, along with the swarm of drum attacks that Michael is hurling. It would seem that the brothers are mutually chasing each other in a state of unease. They move between musical styles and guitar effects, plucks, and strums. A brief pause ensues. Bruno, in a voice taken by tonsillitis, expresses a worry that he may yell until he becomes mute. Immediately, the song returns to the beginning, telling us that it is time to get up and go back to work. Before ending, the song bursts out with volcanic energy. Usually, it is during this part that Bruno yells at Michael that he should calm down a little bit because he cannot contain the violence of his strikes. Rage is here, in every strike of the drumstick.

Nemi Pipali's rage takes the traditional figure of the gigantona and reveals its commodified utility in urban modernity. The survival of the dance of the gigantona and the representation of visceral rage in the live performance of the song suggest that knowledge of such rage is fixed through the corporealization of the sound underlying the gigantona's music. "Through performance," Diana Taylor states, "collective memory is transmitted," and becomes transformed, above all, in relation to social trauma (2007, 190). The sound of Nemi Pipali rewards tradition at the same time that it denounces its perversion and re-instates the colonial fissure transmitting the dance of the gigantona and enano cabezón. In this way Nemi Pipali connects the gigantona with its distant origin of denunciation and critical reflection of reality through sound and anguish, not through linguistic discourse.

Antonio Cornejo Polar asserts that the act of capturing oral tradition in written form is part of the "foundational violence of colonization" (2003, 2). The conjunction of discourse, subject, and representation in writing prevents us from fully valuing the Latin American subject, composed of multiple discourses and temporalities. Cornejo locates the beginning of a "non-dialectic heterogeneity" in the dialogue between an Inca leader, Atahualpa, and a Spanish priest,

Father Vicente Valverde, in Cajamarca in 1532 (1996, 843). That dialogue, according to Cornejo, begins the political side of multilingualism, and, most importantly, initiates the domination of the written over the oral (2003, 19-20).

Cornejo reviews the chronicles of Cajamarca and demonstrates that in each story we can find subtle variations of the encounter between Atahualpa and Valverde. Due to the enterprise of domination and colonization, the encounter of orality and writing put into contact distinct rationalities, symbolic universes, and impossible interactions. At the end of the first chapter of his seminal text *Writing in the Air*, Cornejo concludes that:

In these representations, then, orality and writing seem to have both competitive and complementary functions and should be judged not so much for the fidelity with which they reproduce certain models but rather for their urgency in symbolizing contents of multiple and changing collective worldviews that recognize that the death of Atahualpa tells a very long story (implied metaphorically and metonymically) and is not an event frozen in a distant past... [T]he death of the Inca encapsulates the global experience of the Andean people. (2013,44)¹⁵

The encounter in Cajamarca breaks down distinct temporalities whose covenant is death. The traces of this encounter mark the city (broadly writ) and its texts, but they initiate, at the same time, a performative continuity of death that transcends this point of contact, mediating dance, music, and theatrical performances. It seems this is precisely what we feel with Nemi Pipali's song "Enano Cabezón": the continuity of rage inherent in the performativity of the gigantona dance, which transcends indigenous, mestizo, or colonial temporalities, and is now naked in the streets of Managua. Michael rejoins these varied traces in the city that affect his body when he performs the song, without apparent control over the force of rage. His interpretation of "Enano Cabezón" is mediated by the performative sensibilities of the gigantona, transporting the anguish and rage from the past to the present.

I want to suggest that the rage present in Michael's uncontrollable strikes and his frenetic rhythm, accompanied by Bruno's maddening rips and yells of agony, are part of the aurality of memory that represents the multitude of rival cultural codes surrounding the heterogeneity of the colonial lettered domain. We tacitly perceive those performative transmissions in the rhythms, harmonies, and melodies that imbricate our oral and musical cultures in the history of colonial conflict. In Nemi Pipali's "Enano Cabezón," the flow of laments denounces the commodification of the folkloric dance. The music recalls the tradition of the dance, thus returning it to its primary cultural function: the critique and mockery of our fragmented society. Following Cornejo Polar, I would also suggest that aural memory frameworks are written "in the air" (2003, 171).

The performative transmission of fragmented history flourishes in the "here and now." It is an inextinguishable spirituality that surreptitiously emerges in modernity, through the sounds that we usually do not perceive in urban daily life. In that sense, the world of the melodies existing as background noise in the city allows the musician to rescue these apparent silences of our culture, composed of a history of hybrid musics and dances that continue to populate our present.

Some things refuse to dissipate in the cloud of an indescribable past. Certain “embers of the past” live on in the “here and now” (Sanjinés 2013, 24, 101). Javier Sanjinés identifies this persistence of the non-contemporary that manages to emerge surreptitiously in Latin American modernities. According to Sanjinés, the “embers of the past” open the “shifts of historical time” and permit us to “see reality through a different prism, in conflict with the prospective, rectilinear view of modernity” (ibid., 1).¹⁶ The heterogeneous cultures of postcolonial societies have multiple and often contradictory interpretations of present time. Sanjinés states that subaltern pasts force us to see history in two ways. One is to regard the subaltern as an “enchanted” past that represents mere objects of observation and study. In the second way, the most important, “we meet ‘illuminations’ that change and modify the present; that impose limits on historical interpretation; that oppose it with their stubborn resistance to ‘historicizing everything,’ to translate the enchanted into a narrative of modernity that ignores these conflicts and paradoxes” (2013, 98).¹⁷

Following Sanjinés, I identify the dance of the gigantona as an ember of the past, since it mediates the experience of the collapsed city in contemporary and non-contemporary times. The continuity of the gigantona’s spirit of denunciation, now present in Nemi Pipali’s “Enano Cabezón,” indicates a surreptitious reappearance of subaltern cosmology that denounces a system of domination. Bruno and Michael perform the song in the “here and now,” but their oral and performative mechanisms break the linear temporality of modernity in the city. Michael mixes in the feeling of street sounds and reminds us of the hegemonic burden that the young men carry on their shoulders as they use this national patrimony to earn a living every night.

“Enano Cabezón” shows us that music helps us to remember what we can feel but not yet understand, even though it is absent from a conventional chronology set up by the visual historicism of the city. The song revives that ember of the past, angrily interrupting the linearity of history while maintaining a spiritual continuity of subaltern cultural cosmologies, transported by orality, dance, music, and other practices that are “written in the air” of the city (to adapt Cornejo Polar).

Nemi Pipali’s music projects what is lived and experienced in the city through musical memories. Yet, in this world of melodies, the Cortina brothers find communicative channels to unite their experiences of the city with Adolfo Beteta’s experiences. In the third part of this essay, I analyze the experience of the city in Beteta’s poetry and its dynamic role in the “fuzzy boundary zone” (Ochoa Gautier 2014, 211) between music and poetry.

3. Adolfo Beteta: Trans-Migratory Poetry

*Roaming ghettos were vomiting
strung-out smack lovers
fighting viciously to glimpse the blissful fix
diminishing hopes
like melting snowflakes in Persian terrain,
shaking uncontrollably
like bony thin crack heads gazing paranoia
through thick vapors of burning gems,
trading stolen goods for a piece of heaven
as street corner stale drunks drown
in pity begging for quarters
on liquor store sidewalks, chasing Night Trains
caressing White Irish Roses.
—“Scenes from a Massachusetts Setting”*

The poet Adolfo Beteta, accompanied by the music of Nemi Pipali, presented the poem that opens this section in the closing event of the IV Encuentro de Estudios de Memoria (Meeting of Memory Studies), carried out in the Instituto de Historia de Nicaragua y Centroamérica (Institute of Nicaraguan and Central American History) of the Universidad Centroamericana (Central American University). In this poem, Beteta presents a myriad of images and symbols that describe the space and bodies of the city of Worcester, Massachusetts. He addresses the periphery of what he calls the “ghetto,” where exclusion, discrimination, and the experience of illegal migration construct urban North American reality. In this section, I analyze how this experience of migration enables a dialogue between the musicians and the poet, in relation to the transcultural experience of the city.

In the stanza above, Beteta spins an unstoppable roulette of words that evoke the vomit of overdosing, far from the marvel of neon and the fluorescence of progress. The verses sketch a paranoid plea and paint a neighborhood armored with liquor stores that sell euphemisms with the liquors “Night Train” and “Irish Rose.” We see people stalking the city in search of the drug that never stops climbing, that “blissful fix.” The stanza sets us on a carousel of entrails, liquor, crack smoke, and an impossible Persian snow. From the hell of segregation, Beteta walks as a subaltern through a city which he constantly contests by representing some of the repugnance he experiences there. As he reads, his face intensifies the meaning of the words, and his gaze twists the emphasis. His stage presence is dominant, in keeping with the performance of slam poetry, which influences his form of recitation. Beteta overpowers the microphone with his body and reads without respect to vocal cadence, forcing the sounds, reveling in chaos.

ILLUSTRATION 7: Adolfo Beteta performs a poem in the Cortina brothers' house. (Photograph by Juan Monte.)

Beteta was born in Managua in 1977 and emigrated to the United States with his mother in 1985. He lived in Miami for some time, but grew up mainly in Worcester. A Massachusetts accent territorially locates his English, the language that still dominates his poetry. In the United States, he studied literature at Worcester State College, where he was influenced by the poetry of Emerson and Whitman. On his left arm he bears a tattoo of the silhouette of the state of Massachusetts. From Managua, Beteta religiously follows all the games of the Boston Red Sox and the New England Patriots. When he moved back to Nicaragua at the age of 22, he had to relearn Spanish. His forgotten mother tongue never supplanted the English language, which had opened the doors to the world of literature for him.

I identify as “trans-migratory” Beteta’s performance in Managua of a poem written in Worcester, Massachusetts, amplified by Nemi Pipali’s musical accompaniment. I also use the concept of transculturation from Fernando Ortiz in order to emphasize the double migratory movement, or double displacement, of Beteta between Managua and Worcester, leaving and coming back, always perceived as a foreigner in both cities. According to Ortiz, transculturation is a “transitive process from one culture to another” (1983, 90). In this process, Ortiz identifies the transmission of heterogeneous cultural practices, negotiating between what is new and what came before, what persists and what is lost.

Beteta's poem and his performance demonstrate transculturation by unpacking the paradigm of migration. The symbolic labyrinths of "otherness" in Beteta's poem denounce the complex and unequal modernity of the United States. The layers broken down by his figurative language intersect with multiple literary, musical, cinematographic, and urban genealogies. The poet presents to us "visionary LSD popping transcendental poets," "mystic fumes of tribal Shamans," "neon strips in Babylonian wonder." In their convergence, these layers evoke the "dying whisper of New England autumn winds."

Beteta's Nicaraguan voice, placed in Worcester and recited in Managua, dislocates his tale and unpacks its meanings. Beteta trans-migrates between cultures, closing the performance of his poem with the dying breath he perceives in the autumn winds of his city, Worcester. I became curious after listening to a slight slip in his voice, a sharp fall in tone that weakened his vocal cords. From the distance of time and place (fifteen years since Beteta moved back to Nicaragua), what sounded before like denunciation and paranoia has been transformed into nostalgia. Distance, in the words of Nidia Villalta, "arouses rootedness, as well as nostalgia and idealization" (2004, 165). The poem's interpretation emerges from a fractured voice. From his country of birth (Nicaragua), Beteta now remembers his home in Massachusetts and succumbs to emotion. The conjunction of overlapping lettered and subaltern domains, reconfigured from the diaspora that he lives in Nicaragua, is the greatest conflict that assimilates Beteta to the city of Managua. In turn, it permits an articulation with Nemi Pipali's music.

Beteta's poetry describes the urban "ghetto," the periphery of the center, in the U.S. Ironically, he returned to Nicaragua to live in one of the centers of the periphery. Now he resides in the neighborhood of Los Robles, "the new center of Managua." Beteta's poetry lives the diaspora territorialized in his country of origin (Nicaragua), while he remembers with nostalgia the places that Emerson evoked in his poetry. The dynamics between the local and the cosmopolitan filter Beteta's experience of the city, with overlapping peripheries and centers and in between temporalities that dislocate geography. This dislocation fragments his place of enunciation and multiplies the symbolism in the universe that he evokes. The heterogeneity of his places and his physical and lyrical displacements travel through his poetry, and, above all, in performance as he recites his poetry.

Following Nelly Richard, the blurriness between center and periphery results in "multi-situated and changing functions [of places that are] no longer fixed locations." Richard problematizes the conventional locations of center and periphery, since they currently tend to "be subdivided and re-multiplied in transverse segmentations that recreate 'a Third World in every First world' and a 'First World in every Third world'" (1993, 214-15). Beteta encounters the geographic dissonance that Richard problematizes. The experience of Managua is no longer written only in Managua; it is written in the United States, in Costa Rica, in Spain, etc. The rage, repugnance, and discrimination that Beteta experiences in Worcester speak as viscerally as in Managua. In this sense, his co-performance with Nemi Pipali articulates the spaces of contact between his memory of Worcester and the lived experience of the Cortina brothers in Managua.

While the Cortina brothers are displaced from Cedro Galán to Managua, Beteta was displaced from Worcester to Managua. Even though Beteta's poem is written in English and describes the space of Worcester, we cannot ignore that his figures and images find the fissures of the "here and now" in Managua, the time fragmented by the cracks in the migratory experience. The segregation of our city also vibrates in the city lights that offer all the riches of progress to a Managua scarred by poverty. Poetry and music enunciate the irony of a city segregated by tourism and marketed in English, a city which is home to international call centers, where thousands of Nicaraguans speak English every day, running through millions of calls every minute to sell products, collect bills, or resolve problems for U.S. cellphone companies.¹⁸ Managua's consumption depends increasingly on the remittances sent by families abroad where, in turn, contemporary Nicaraguan identity is enunciated.

Beteta's performance postulates a rupture of narrative conventions of the present time, since he mixes the stacked temporalities in the "here and now" of Managua. In this negotiation between place of origin and place of nostalgia, Beteta reconstructs his performative identity, "where the being located and not [el estar y no], the being and not being [el ser y no ser] are the permanent individual and collective anguish, with the alleviation of places of encounter where those painful experiences are shared" (Villalta 2004, 179).

The reformulation of Beteta's identity, stemming from multiple migrations embodied in the experience of the city, is the nucleus of this new "trans-migratory identity," since it combines diasporas and exiles by way of revisited interpretations of the center in the periphery, transferring lived experiences through hybrid, heterogeneous urban geographies and temporalities. Beteta's trans-migratory identity crosses the soft borders between his experience of the city and the experience of the Cortina brothers. That is, this identity migrates across languages, cultures, geographies, and musics. Beteta and the Cortina brothers manage to establish affective ties that denote an intimate articulation of their "painful shared experiences" in the city. The visceral force that weakens Beteta's voice at the end of his poem about Worcester and the sadness that dulls its violence resound in Bruno and Michael's musical arrangement for the poem.

If we let ourselves be swept away by the images and strong words of the poem, we lose the capacity to feel the pain those lines contain. During the presentation of the poem "Scenes from a Massachusetts Setting," we can capture the moment of aural and lettered reciprocity between the artists, that "fuzzy boundary zone" (Ochoa Gautier 2014, 211). Similar to "Bescherelle," the poem affects the bodies of Bruno and Michael, disfiguring their faces and charging with nostalgia the performance of the music through their instruments. At the same time, Beteta loses the pitch of his voice, and his eyes move away from the paper to recite not so much the words, but rather his nostalgia. Although he loses the vocal cadence and pitch, he does not lose the feeling that carries him like an avalanche to the end of his poem, crying out for the autumn winds of New England that do not reach Managua.

4. Conclusion

In its hybridity and heterogeneity, the experience of the Latin American city becomes an articulatory axis between Nemi Pipali and Adolfo Beteta. The contributions of Cornejo Polar, García Canclini, Ochoa, Sanjinés, and Richard alert us to the hegemonies of lettered culture and permit us to focus on the transcultural transmission of urban experiences which migrate between different centers and peripheries. In this line of thinking, Villalta and Taylor allow us to contextualize the performative place of enunciation and its affective transmission of memory and culture. This transdisciplinary approach permits us to propose music as a social framework of performative memory, transmitted by the sounds present in the hybrid city, and by the heterogeneous migrant subject who is displaced and divided between the center and the periphery.

At the same time, we find that Nemi Pipali's and Beteta's experiences reveal a city in flight and in constant trans-migration. They problematize the phenomenon of migration by fragmenting discourses in various displacements inside and outside of Managua. These artists' forms of knowledge speak to us of a *tessitura* of the city, of displacements and divisions of the meaning of nostalgia. The aural and lettered experience of the hybrid city surfaces in the layering of diverse temporalities and modernities, and in the collation of its words and sounds, whose sentiments incarnate the past in the present. Music and poetry, above all, permit us to find the connecting threads and soft edges that unite symbolic universes constituting the non-dialectic heterogeneity of the fragmented postcolonial subject.

Finally, Nemi Pipali and Beteta's encounter enables us to approach with new eyes—and ears—the marvelous real that inhabits the city of Managua. Thanks to these artists, we manage to resolve our emotions in the middle of the urban chaos that surrounds us. Each time that Beteta and Nemi Pipali come together in co-performance, they travel through time and space, and juxtapose cultural universes that interlace different planes of the city, a dimension key to modernity. They also challenge us to pay close attention to the changing city through the sounds and symbols of everyday experience; to hear, feel and write the chaotic tension that runs underneath our postcolonial urbanities. The musicians and the poet wrestle with the possibilities of artistic expression in Managua's tortuous reality. These phenomena speak to us of new music, new poetry, and new times.

Notes

¹ Updated documentation is available through the Organization of American States Inter-American Commission on Human Rights Special Monitoring Mechanism for Nicaragua: <http://www.oas.org/en/iachr/jsForm/?File=/en/iachr/meseni/boletines.asp>

² The *Enano Cabezón* video is on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aOmUQJmF4MI>

³ The YouTube video link is at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D8nTzh24fbA>

⁴ Author's note: The author would like to thank wholeheartedly Crystal Neill, Lila Ellen Gray, and Richard Wolf, the translators and editors who gave extra attention and care to this essay. The author is in special debt to Amanda Minks for all her support and dedication to publish this work. For this, I express my complete gratitude.

⁵ Editors' note: the quotation in the first epigraph is from Kristeva (2010, 189), as cited in Monte's original publication.

⁶ Editors' note: the second epigraph is our translation of Carpentier (1973, 11).

⁷ Editors' note: the concept of the "marvelous real" was first articulated in the prologue to Carpentier's 1949 novel *The Kingdom of this World* (from which Monte quotes in the second epigraph).

⁸ Editors' note: here and below, unless otherwise specified, we provide our English translation from the original Spanish texts cited by Monte.

⁹ Editors' note: Latin American discourses have often foregrounded "center/periphery" relations to articulate the inequities of economic, cultural, and intellectual production and circulation, which often follow North/South divisions. Here, Monte ironically notes the overlapping layers of peripheral locations. Cedro Galán is peripheral to Managua, the capital city of a country that is peripheral to global and hemispheric centers—here, especially the U.S.

¹⁰ Editors' note: another collaboration between Nemi Pipali and Adolfo Beteta performing "A Breather" is accessible on Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D8nTzh24fbA>

¹¹ Editors' note: the album version of the song is currently available on Soundcloud and also on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sdrp6ycygJg>

¹² Author's note: The quotations without citation correspond to informal conversations between the author and members of the band in 2014-2015. Bruno and Michael read all the drafts and corroborated the quotations. Both corrected and added to the quotations as they considered convenient to better express their ideas.

¹³ Editors' note: The music video for the song "Enano Cabezón," a collaborative production with the Nicaraguan independent media company Cierito Güis, can be accessed at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aOmUQJmF4MI>

¹⁴ Author's note: For more on *La Gigantona*, see Cuadra and Pérez Estrada (1978, 391) and Buitrago (1993). Recordings of *La Gigantona* were made by the folklorist Salvador Cardenal Argüello, released in the seventh volume of the audio anthology *Nicaragua: Música y Canto* (1977).

¹⁵ Editors' note: here we reproduce and cite the English translation of this text by Lynda J. Jentsch (Duke University Press, 2013). The original citation was Cornejo Polar (2003:63-64).

¹⁶ Editors' note: this is our translation of the Spanish text quoted by Monte.

¹⁷ Editors' note: here we reproduce and cite the English translation of this text by David Frye (Duke University Press, 2013). The original citation was Sanjinés (2009, 100).

¹⁸ Author's note: Ironically enough, after this paper was published in Spanish, Beteta moved on to invest in his own outsourced company in Managua.

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